THE GREAT ADVENTURE

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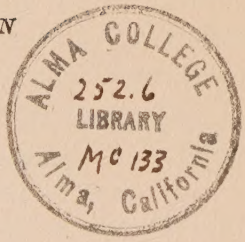
The GREAT ADVENTURE

LENTEN LECTURES BY

THE REV. JOHN McCLOREY, S.J.

SECOND EDITION



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INTRODUCTION

My purpose in giving these six lectures on the Great Adventure is to place before you the attractive Personality of Christ; in order that respect, admiration and love for Him may induce you to do things which mere right and wrong, mere moral motives, the mere beauty of virtue and ugliness of sin would never move you to.

The Great Adventure:—The Epic of the King, The First Conquests, The Youthful Templar, The Vision of Horror, The Red Cross Knight, and Banners and Trumpets; these very titles have a strong appeal! But what is a title compared to a fact! Now Christ is the great appealing Fact.

Away back in the recesses of eternity the Divine Poet excogitated the Epic of the Incarnation, and being a Hero as well as a Poet, He acted it out in time.

No artistic creation of the mind of man, whether poem, painting, sculpture or music, can bear comparison with that Work. Especially the gigantic proportions and warm

humanity of the Hero, and the magnitude and romantic brilliancy of His Enterprise are unique.

The idea of God becoming a man to captivate men was beyond the wildest poet's dream until it was embodied in a fact. Nothing like the charm of the stable and the crib had ever been thought of until it happened. The triumph of the cross appeared too absurd to be true until it was accomplished. And the shining empty sepulchre seemed as empty as a shining dream until men saw that it was true.

To propose a system of life and a scheme of morality without Christ in it, is as ridiculous as to present a play without a hero. I am afraid that in giving our sermons and lectures we often fall into that mistake. And when we ask men to imitate Christ, are we not often satisfied with saying in general that Christ is our model,—without giving the details of His life? It would be desirable to present all the phases of His life. But since in six brief Lenten lectures this is clearly impossible, we are doing what appears to be the next best thing, namely, showing three great events of His early life and three of His maturity.

I trust that God in His mercy will vitalize this presentation with His grace, that the Great Adventure will sink into your hearts, and that all of you will fare forth in knightly fashion with the chivalry of Christ for the spiritual conquest of the world.

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THE GREAT ADVENTURE

I

THE EPIC OF THE KING

"And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth.

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.

Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God.

Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever.

And of his kingdom there shall be no end.

And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?

And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren:

Because no word shall be impossible with God.

And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke, I, 26–38.)

This is a simple and sublime statement of the greatest truth in the world next to the Holy Trinity, *i.e.,* the Incarnation of the Son of God. The beauty, the sweetness, the simplicity, the epical grandeur and romance of God himself becoming a man to captivate the human race, are contained in these words. Tears start to my eyes and I choke with a catch in the throat when I read them. Here is highest poetry, not fictional but real. Nothing in any secular history goes straight to the heart so poignantly.

For instance, there was Gabriel! How exalted he must have felt on being commissioned to carry such a message to the earth;

and if envy be possible in Heaven, how jealous the other angelic hosts must have been at his selection for that office!

There was Mary! A young girl in her humility never dreaming of the distinction awaiting her; in comparison with whom the great women of the Old Testament,—Judith, Esther, and Rachel,—were as nothing;—women, however, to whom, in her naïve lowliness, she looked up with reverence and awe; she, Mary, the maiden whom all future generations would call blessed! She had been prepared for the honor of divine motherhood by her Immaculate Conception and vowed virginity, and she would be heroically worthy of Him whom she was about to bear. Even after the Son of God was conceived in her womb, she was so humble that she went into the hill country to serve her cousin Elizabeth in her need. For Elizabeth said to her: "Whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" But with all her self-abasement her heart was leaping with ecstasy and when Elizabeth said to her: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke I, 42) her lips gave voice to that exquisite lyric which thrilled the Ju-

dean hills and has rung down to us through the listening ages: "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation to generations, to them that fear him. He hath showed might in his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel his servant, being mindful of his mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever." (Luke I, 46–55.)

How fortunate the man who is officially privileged to speak of the Incarnation of the Son of God! I would rather be a preacher with this truth on my lips than a lawyer, a doctor, a business man, a poet, a general of armies, or a king.

The honor of God requires that the Incarnation should be heralded. For it would be a grave delinquency not to proclaim to the

whole world the ineffable goodness of God, which manifested itself in such a glorious way.

And men need to be told this story. "Faith cometh by hearing," says St. Paul. How can men be expected to know and appreciate this transcendent mystery unless it is preached to them? Interest in war, politics, statesmanship, diplomacy, art and science, athletics, business, and the professions is keen to-day because those activities and avocations are advertised. If the Incarnation were advertised, it would engross humanity. It did so once;—when twelve Apostles, captivated by the beauty of It, rushed through the world like drunken men, intoxicated as indeed they were from that brimming cup of delight, crying out everywhere to willing ears "the good tidings of great joy." Prayer, ceremonial, ritual, especially the Sacraments and holy Mass, are means of vivifying faith. But preaching also is a means; and it is not in accord with Apostolic tradition to place excessive stress on those other agencies while neglecting the ministry of the Word.

Preaching the Incarnation is emphatically imperative to-day, because present disbelief in It is widespread. Liberal non-Catholics

now regard Christ as the ultimate expression of human nobility, but not as God. Thereby they would eviscerate Christianity and lower it to the plane of a purely natural cult. They would undo the work of 1900 years, which has been the fruit of belief in Christ's Godhead, and reduce the human race to the pagan state it was in before Christ came. For it must be remembered that purely human codes of morality were proposed and partially practiced by the pagans. A code of morality is not the essence of Christianity. The essence of Christianity is belief in the divinity of Christ.

Love, purity, and knightly courage are fit materials for an epical tale. Therefore I have named the Incarnation, "The Epic of the King," because the Son of God came to earth as a Lover, as a Purifier, and as a Knight; with these three symbols on His coat of arms:—a heart, a cross, and a sword.

Mary was the beloved of God; and He loved her so intensely that He wished to share physically in her very flesh, to have her blood in His veins, to be nursed at her breast, to lie in her arms, to enjoy her virginal companionship for thirty years, to have His eyes closed in death by her fingers

and to lead her home with Him after the sorrows of life.

Explain that if you can!—Why the Almighty, out beyond the farthest star, with full sufficiency of happiness in Himself from all eternity, the Creator of the Universe, should have become enamoured with a maiden whose name was Mary, of the little town of Nazareth! The saints with all reverence have ventured to call it the "Foolishness of God." He wooed her through a seraph of Heaven, and when she consented to His amorous, but chaste approaches (think of a creature enjoying the privilege of either accepting or discountenancing the courtship of the Creator!) He made her fruitful with a Divine Child. "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," she said and "the Word was made flesh." Forthwith the Father claimed her as His daughter; the Son as His mother; and the Holy Ghost as His spouse.

In the world of nature, love is the greatest thing. Life begins with love and marriage. So too the economy of salvation starts with an espousal. Is Christianity a drab thing? Look at it aright, and you will see all through it a glowing romance.

And God extended His love to us.

It is the opinion of certain theologians, that even if the human race had not fallen into sin and needed redemption, the Son of God would nevertheless have become Man purely out of love, in order to converse and mingle with men on earth as a Man; to be like them in body and soul; to acquire experimental knowledge of their aspirations, loves, hopes and joys; to go through the whole series of human experiences (marriage and sin alone excepted); to enjoy their company and to give them the pleasure of His. And His love would not have been impersonal for the whole human race in general, but particularized and concentrated for each individual.

In Tennyson's "St. Agnes Eve" the virginal relationship of the Bridegroom with His bride is poetically expressed. The Following of Christ by Thomas à Kempis contains intimate colloquies between the Divine Lover and His beloved. The Canticle of Canticles symbolizes their mutual admiration and tenderness with an Oriental exuberance of imagery. And saints like Francis of Assisi, Philip Neri, Agnes, Cecilia, Teresa, and the "Little Flower" languished with rap-

turous delight in Christ's spiritual embrace.

Like a human wooer who decks himself out in winsome finery to attract, so God, lest His majesty should frighten us, doffs it and dons instead the intriguing qualities of a human being, then knocks at the door of our heart. "Behold He standeth behind our wall, looking in through the window, looking through the lattices."

How unworthily, therefore, have not the generality of men thought of God! According to their various views, they materialistically identify God with the visible universe; or hold that He is the Great Unknown,—a sort of impersonal cause of all things, without knowledge or regard for His creatures; or visualize Him as a God, personal indeed and aware of us, but too great to be interested in the insignificant doings of earth; or endow Him with a perverse delight in the sufferings of men; or regard Him as just and holy without a thought of His goodness and love. Others anthropomorphically formulate to themselves the unworthy divine image of a white-bearded old man, or an eye looking out at us menacingly from a triangle, or an aesthete, over fond of harps and violins, or an oriental potentate living in a

crystal palace on a golden boulevard; or a cruel deviser of hell, or a huckster bartering with us for our service through the appeal of celestial sceptres and crowns.

Let us not substitute such travesties for the God of goodness and love!

Now, therefore, no longer oppressed with the sense of my meanness, shall I mutter with Job: "Why do I cumber the earth?" For now I shall counterbalance the humility becoming to my natural nothingness with the roseate pride proper to the beloved of God. Now, instead of being indifferent or contemptuous to my neighbor, I shall admire him as the favored of Heaven. Now I shall linger in imaginative contemplation over Christ's every gesture and look. Now I shall dress myself beautifully to delight His eyes, appropriating the qualities which befit a lover and which He possessed. Now, just as a human lover becomes oblivious of everything else in the radiance of her beloved's countenance, so I shall despise all the world can offer, as so much trash, because I am infinitely rich in His beauty and love.

Oh, truly, the Incarnation, considered as an epical love-affair, steeping the world in the red glow of a heart, changes the whole

face of things, makes despair and pessimism impossible, glorifies life and suffuses the hardships and dullness of religion with romantic coloring.

However, as a matter of fact, we *did* sin; and so the Son of God came not only as a Lover, but also as a Purifier, cleansing the world with five streams from the Cross.

And this was a work of epical magnitude. In mythology, Hercules, given the task of cleansing the Augean stables, turned a river from its course into them and thus made them wholesome and clean. Filthy and malodorous stables are not an esthetic idea. But the herculean feat of drawing a river from its bed and flushing them into a condition of spotlessness is highly poetical. And so the Saviour, doing a similar but more gigantic work, assumes heroic proportions.

Belief in the fact and universality of sin is regarded by many as a relic of the superstitious Middle Ages. They look upon actual sins as necessary results of our innate weakness, for which it would be unjust on the part of God to hold us responsible. Original sin, they say, is absurd and impossible because it implies guilt in individual souls who have committed no wrong. They add that the

universal perversity of mankind, which, according to orthodox theologians, is the effect of the Fall, must be attributed to the original grossness of the brute beasts from which we have evolved.

By consequence they must deny the mercy of God. For mercy is impossible without sin. And so the most touching and glorious attribute of the Deity is effaced from their concept of God. Suffering also, which is our portion of satisfaction for sin, they must lay either to God's cruelty or wholly to man's evil will. And, of course, the courage of example derived from the crucified Atoner for our misdeeds, cannot enter into their scheme of religious practice and belief.

In regard to our irresponsibility for personal sin this may be said in general: If men are not accountable for personal sins, neither are they praiseworthy for personal virtues; there is no difference between moral beauty and moral turpitude; the whole dignity of life perishes; so-called free agents are no more than machines, and God can have no means of enforcing His commands to rational creatures.

The fact of original sin has been most emphatically revealed in Holy Writ, espe-

cially through St. Paul, and is the first condition of the economy of salvation. It is a mystery, impossible of comprehension. But the hardship of accepting it has been increased by misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

For this reason it will be useful to state what original sin *is not.*

It is not true that God was cruelly toying with humanity when he placed our first parents in Eden, from which he forthwith expelled them for the trifling fault of eating forbidden fruit. On the contrary, God surrounded them with every pleasure because He loved them. He wished them to stay in the garden and gave them every means of doing so. True, He forsaw their fall. (He did not *cause* it; Adam and Eve, being free agents, were the cause). He permitted their sin, and He did so because He knew that the good attendant upon it would be far in excess of its evil results. When St. Augustine called the sin of Adam *"felix culpa"*[1] (that is, "Happy fault"), he was referring to the blessings which it would occasion; chiefly the Incarnation of the Son of God.

It is not true that Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden for a peccadillo. The apple, it

is true, was a little thing. But *eating* the apple emphatically *was not!* And this is intelligible from the fact that our first parrents were not burdened and oppressed with the passions which make sin so easy for us. They had their souls under perfect control and their feelings wholly in hand. Hence they disobeyed a grave mandate of their Creator with full knowledge, cool calculation, and deliberate perverse consent.

It is not true that the children of Adam are besmirched with a sin for which they are in no sense responsible. They are responsible for original sin, not personally, but vicariously; just as the citizens of the United States for instance are accountable, not personally but vicariously, for the official acts of the President, their vicar, their representative. Now if the people of a country have a right to appoint one of their number as a representative of the nation, surely God had a right to constitute Adam vicar of the race, —as in fact He did.

It is not true that original sin is a personal offence of each individual. For according to the doctrine of the Church it is only an inherited blot, somewhat like the stigma at-

taching to the personally innocent child of a convict and criminal.

It is not true that by the sin of Adam his children were deprived of a single natural attribute. They were despoiled only of unmerited supernatural gifts. The case is like that of a king, who, without merit on the part of a certain subject, makes him a duke with the provision that he and his children shall be dukes forever if he remains faithful to the king, but shall lose the honor if he proves treacherous. Without merit on Adam's part he and his children were raised to a sort of ducal estate by supernatural grace. Adam sinned and lost the supernatural preëminence for himself and for us.

It is not true that if Christ had not redeemed us, the human race would have been condemned to the hell of *fire* for original sin. The loss by that sin means only that we were deprived of the beatific vision of God and reduced to the natural state in which we would have been had we never been supernaturally exalted by grace. At least there is nothing in the teaching of Christianity which obliges us to give a more austere interpretation to the word "loss" than this.

Finally, people who find original sin so hard to accept, should keep in mind that God Himself died on the Cross to deliver us from it.

Life will always be an enigma to the religious philosopher who does not make sin, original and actual, the prime postulate of his theory of life.

Let us, therefore, believe in the fact of sin; and let us visualize the great King, the heroic Purifier, the Divine Hercules, mounted on the cross, with nails and spear opening five fountain-heads of crimson purity which wash immaculate the fetid world.

But, cleansing the world from the cross is not the only thing. Virtue must be practiced; and Christ the magnetic Leader, appealing to our sense of hero worship, with sword in hand shows us the way.

The psychology of compelling personality and enthusiastic following is exemplified by the military heroes of history; Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, Joan of Arc, Napoleon Bonaparte. Those men and that woman simply said: "Follow me"; and forthwith soldiers without reckoning the cost of the enterprise or anticipating re-

ward, left home and all to march under their banners to unknown issues of life and death, wounds, disgrace, glory and imprisonment. Those leaders were demi-gods who wove the web of enchantment around anyone who ventured into the charmed circle of their spells.

Roughly analysing their psychic power, their potent magic, I would submit that it was composed of three elements: first, the power of dreaming dreams. Every great doer must first have been a great dreamer. True, a dreamer can be and often is a mere visionary, without issue in practical results. But it is equally true that nobody whose imagination has not first glowed in solitude with the vision of the heights, will ever afterwards do anything worth while. Secondly, practicality, by which they embodied their dreams in cold facts; a sublime egotism and sort of divine conceit which made them sure of success. Third, a magnanimous spirit of democracy, whereby they forgot their kingly privileges and the exclusiveness of their high estate and placed themselves on a level with their humblest followers.

Joan of Arc at Domremy had her vision of driving the English from her native soil and

resurrecting France long before she did the thing in fact.

Napoleon, after the frustration of his most cherished design of transferring a conquering army across the Channel into England, through the disobedience and defeat of his Admiral by Nelson at Trafalgar, without being disheartened for a moment by this reverse, but rather trusting sublimely in his star, forthwith marched to Austria and won the battle of Austerlitz, the most glorious of his career.

When on the thirsting plains of India his lieutenants brought a drink of sparkling water in a helmet to Alexander, the king raised it to his feverish lips, but seeing that there was no water for his men, deliberately turned the helmet upside down and pouring its contents on the ground said: "Let the sands swallow it; if you will not drink, neither will I!"

When the Carthagenians were preparing in Spain for their expedition against Rome, while the courtly followers of King Hamilcar kept high festivity, sat down at nightly banquet boards, and stretched their limbs luxuriously on couches of down in silken tents, the young prince Hannibal ate the

food of common soldiers and slept with them in his military cloak on the hard ground beneath the frosty sky.

It was through their dreams of conquest, their egotistic certainty of success in practice, and their severe democracy that those outstanding military geniuses of history captivated their followers and led them to fabulous triumphs.

Now Christ was a leader with all their natural charm, without their weaknesses, who for two thousand years has bewitched men with His conjuring wand more magically than they, and showed them the way to victories more thrilling than theirs.

And first of all Christ had his visions. During the thirty years spent in the prosaic environment of Nazareth, in His public life, while He preached and prayed to His Father on hilltops at night; in the midst of all this humble plainness of His outward life, His imagination was ablaze and His feelings aglow with dreams of conquest. Alexander's dream was only of a conquered India; Hannibal's, only of a Rome dethroned; Caesar's, only of Gaul, Germany, and Britain prostrate at his feet; Joan of Arc's dream was only of a freed France;

and Napoleon's only of a Europe subject to his will. But Christ dreamed of subduing the whole world, of sending His marshals to the ends of the earth and remotest seas, of battering the gates of Hell, cutting a way to Heaven for Himself and us, building a religious empire, His Church, which would outlast the ages; and most especially of enthroning Himself in the hearts of men. And all this He would do, not by fire and sword, but with the potency of love.

And as Christ *dreamed,* so also he *did,* with a certainty of result which transcends the assurance of the great generals of the world. For, after all, they did not attain to their hearts' desire. Alexander, after sweeping across India to the Ganges and beyond, in ten short years, died of a fever, after a night of debauchery, while still young. Hannibal, after crossing the insurmountable Alps, roaring down into Italy, winning the battle of Cannae, and all but toppling Rome from her seven hills, was recalled, died in prison, and his native city Carthage was destroyed. Caesar after rushing through middle Europe with his "I came, I saw, I conquered" rapidity of victory, was murdered by Brutus and

Cassius at the base of Pompey's statue. Joan of Arc, after freeing France in eight brief months, was burned at the stake in the market-place of Rouen. And Napoleon, after sitting on the top of the world imperially for twenty years, died on a barren rock in the middle of the sea.

But Christ, after his triumph on the hill of Calvary, rose from the dead, mounted to the empyrean on Ascension Day, entered His Kingdom through a triumphal arch, and took His place on an everlasting throne.

And what was true of this world's generals, was more emphatically true of their followers. For most of those did not see the brilliant outcome of their efforts and sufferings. Oh, we behold the mailed soldiers of Alexander marching out of Macedonia into the fabulous Orient, with banners flying, to the sound of martial brass. But how few of them came back to their native land! And down the Appian way, century after century, with flushed hopes went the legionaries of Rome. But they left their bones on fields afar. And our own soldiers in our own day, how enthusiastically they left for "over there," but how many of them are still lying

"over there!" No, the path of war is a great white way paved with the bleached bones of the dead!

But every soldier who partakes in the adventure of Christ will arrive at the goal of success as surely as did the King Himself.

And third, in regard to magnanimous democracy, surely Christ, if anybody, can say that He will not ask us to make any march, to suffer any hunger or thirst to keep any watch, to fight any battle or endure any wound which have not been his portion in a superlative degree before us. Christ could have directed the campaign of salvation safely from the ramparts of Heaven. But he came down from the heights and hurled Himself into the thick of the battle; so that now in direst distress we can look at the Cross and take courage from His royal fellowship in arms.

Is it any wonder, then, that when this incomparable Leader stood up before men and said: "I am your King, my purpose is to conquer the whole world, victory is assured, and I shall not ask you to do anything that I have not done myself"—men were enthralled by his personality, electrified by the glamour of his enterprise, encouraged by the

sublime certainty of success, touched by His magnanimous sharing of their hardships; and engaged in His expedition with heroic abandon? The story of Christianity at its best is the story of that epical adventure, that romantic march, that peerless leadership, that hero worship and reckless following. Martyrs, Apostles, Confessors, virgins have been the chivalric body-guard of the marching Christ. Nineteen hundred years have witnessed their exploits; every soil has drunk of their blood; every nation has given its volunteers; and every continent and distant isle of the seas has seen their banners and heard their march. I told that story once before. I shall not repeat it now. But I shall note one phase of it brought into prominence recently by the beatification of the Canadian martyrs.

Jogues, Brebeuf, Lallemant, Garnier, René Goupil, and the rest of that devoted band left behind them the comforts, luxury, and culture of France for the North American wilderness of the Iroquois. Discovery, worldly exploits in arms, pioneering, were not the motives of their dangerous expedition; but they saw Christ beckoning to them from across the sea, and with the enlarged

imagination of enthusiasts they visioned the possibility of a new spiritual empire abroad, they saw in spirit whole nations being led into the kingdom of Christ, and they endured fire and sword to accomplish that result. And Marquette worked his way down towards the mouth of the Mississippi to reclaim the unknown, because day by day before him went the King.

Now this same Christ stands before you here to-night, with the same trumpet call to arms. For Christ is not a myth, but an historical character; not only a past fact, but a present reality. Christ still lives, His army still tramps in serried columns, though invisible and unheard by the generality, and the shock of battle still sounds to spiritual ears. Napoleon once enthralled nations; now he is dead, and nobody would die for the dead Napoleon. But people daily give up all they have and die for Christ. And *you* must either accept or reject his call. You cannot ignore it. An awful responsibility, you say? Yes it is, but also a thrilling one. When you were young, you read adventurous stories and tales of high romance; and while you read, you perhaps regretted that the days of chivalry were dead. But the days of chivalry

are not dead! The superb Knight, Jesus Christ, still rides plumed. Adventure is still in the air. To-day the King's expedition is afoot. To-day, *to-day,* His captains are gathering, His banners are flapping, His trumpets are braying, His cymbals are clashing, His drums are beating, His pipes are shrilling;—and turning suddenly upon you, and looking at you kindly, yes, but also decisively and with a challenge, He asks *"Will you follow Me?"* Brethren, what will you say? What *can* you say but: "Lord, lead Thou the way, and whatever the cost may be, I will follow Thee!"

II

THE FIRST TWO CONQUESTS

Last year in Palestine, on Christmas eve, I walked alone along the ancient road which leads from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And as I walked, I thought of many things;—of Christmas eve afar, some 6,000 miles away at home in old Detroit; of snow-packed streets, of holly wreaths in windows, of many-colored lighted bulbs on Christmas trees, set in the snow in garden plots on boulevards; of the cheer in homes, the candies, nuts, and fruits; and the joy of Christmas eve; yes, and the sorrow! For there is no sorrow comparable to the grief in a broken heart on Christmas eve.

Then my mind leaped back through the years to a Christmas eve of my boyhood days. I saw again with all the vividness of reality the flakes of snow which flooded me as I left the church after confession; on the way home a butcher's window frosted with the cold; and the coal hole from which I

carried bucketfulls of lumps to insure a glowing hearth for Christmas eve; through it all my boyish soul suffused with the joy of Bethlehem.

And as I trudged along that holy road, I conjured up another scene: my first Christmas at the Novitiate; and the dear old hymn "*Venite Adoremus,*" waking me unexpectedly from sleep in the middle of the night; when for a moment I thought: This must be Heaven! And old St. Louis came to mind, and a midnight mass at which, instead of preaching, I read to the people two glorious texts. The first was from the "Introit" for the first Sunday after Christmas: "While silence reigned in the dead vast and middle of the night, and the stars had finished half their course, the Lord Omnipotent came down from His throne." The second was from the feast for Christmas day in the Roman Martyrology: "From the creation of the world, when in the beginning God created Heaven and earth 5199 years; from the flood 2957; from the call of Abraham 2015; from the exit of the people of Israel from Egypt under Moses 1510; from the anointing of King David 1032; in the 65th week according to the prophecy of Daniel;

in the 194th Olympiad; in 752nd year from the foundation of Rome, in the 42nd year of the reign of Octavius Augustus, all the earth being at peace, Jesus Christ, eternal God, Son of the everlasting Father wishing to sanctify the world by His most merciful coming, having been conceived by the Holy Ghost and nine months having elapsed since His conception, was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary. The nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh."

And perhaps because I was stopping at the Casa Nova of the Franciscans, I thought of dear St. Francis of Assisi, who set up the first Christmas tree in Umbria and made the first imitation crib, with sheep and shepherds, angels and kings.

And when at my journey's end I sat down in my room in the Casa Nova of the Franciscans, all alone, with these holy remembrances in mind, I had a vision:—not a real one, but a vision of a sort; and it was this:

A straggling road runs up from Nazareth through valley and over hill to Bethlehem. The sky is low, snow is falling; and winds are hushed on the first Christmas eve. An ox and an ass, two humble servitors, go up

right loyally to Bethlehem to help keep the Child warm in the crib with their breath. A little servant maid leads the ox. Joseph is at the ass' head and Mary is seated on the beast, with her the Child, wrapped in the snow-white garment of her virginal flesh. And the peace of God like an accompanying atmosphere surrounds them.

Another party is on the road;—not an ox and an ass, but prancing steeds, their proud necks arched, champing their bits, their burnished hoofs upraised to smite the ground, striking lightning from stones; and camels richly caparisoned swaying along rhythmically half in a dream; and chariots inlaid with ivory and gold. And on the camels and horses and in the chariots are men and women, handsome, black-eyed and olive-skinned, their flowing robes richly dyed, their fingers glittering in Oriental fashion with diamonds, and their sandals inlaid with topaz and emerald, Jewish aristocrats going up from the two golden cities by the sea, colonies of Jews, to Bethlehem, their native town, to be enrolled according to the mandate of the Emperor. Laughter rings and they chatter as they go casting half pitiful, half contemptuous glances at the

barren country side; wondering what sort of hospitality awaits them in the inns and arranging ahead of time the very moment they shall leave this God-forsaken neighborhood to return to the luxury and comfort of the golden cities by the sea. And the spirit of unrest like an accompanying atmosphere surrounds them.

For a moment the two parties ride abreast in the road;—a striking contrast between the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world; between His poverty and its wealth; His peace and its unrest. Then the brilliant cavalcade sweeps on, and the Holy Family trudges after it.

For over 1900 years men have seen that contrast and made their choice. For every man must make his choice; and you, too, must choose. What will your election be? Every rose has its thorn. Beneath the rose of the glory of the world is the thorn of its disillusionment. He who indulges in the fragrance of the rose must feel the pricking of the thorn. Beneath the rose of Christ's beautiful Humanity is the thorn of His unworldliness. He who submits to the sting of the thorn may hope to scent the rose.

A street runs through the heart of Beth-

lehem. On either side the street are inns; and through the doors and windows of the inns come lights from lamps and warmth from glowing hearths and savoury odors from cooking stoves, making the bleak outside bleaker by contrast. Joseph asks for hospitality, but there is no place for them in the inns; and his heart breaks for the mother with her Child. Is it possible that the little servant maid, having seen for the first time this afternoon the glory of the world upon the road, was half disloyal for a moment to her poor master and mistress of Nazareth; and that now she would like to steal away from them to satisfy her famished appetite, to toast her toes at a hearth, and to snuggle warmly between sheets? If so, one look at Mary is enough; and from the depth of her little heart she must have cried: "No, no, I have been with Thee too long. I have known Thee too well. I will not leave Thee, but will follow Thee!" And many a time no doubt you have imagined yourself in that Christmas scene; and have thought to yourself that you would not have abandoned them to the tender mercies of the night. A pleasing feeling; but was it sentimental piety or true devotion? To answer

that question, ask this: How do you act now? For if now you decline the hardships of life, you would have shunned them then. But if now you try to accept them with some degree of patience and humility, you can take the consolation to your heart that you would not have left Joseph and Mary, but would have followed to the crib.

"She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no place for them in the inn."[2] Behold the beauty, the austere beauty of that Christmas scene which has gripped the world and held it fast for well-nigh twenty centuries; —the frosty sky, the chill star-light overhead, the ox and the ass, St. Joseph standing at the rear of the cave, Mary kneeling at the crib and the Infant looking out for the first time upon the world! She wraps Him up in swaddling clothes and lays Him in a manger; then falls to her knees, looks down into His face, adores and loves. "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will," angels sing out to shepherd ears, flooding the heavens and earth with mellifluous ecstasy. But Mary, unconscious of the celestial choiring, with a deeper

music in her soul, kneels, looks down into His face and loves. The shepherds come, with lambs on shoulders and crooks in hand, and in their hearts the "good tidings of great joy"; they come, adore, rejoice, and go away. But Mary, oblivious of everything, kneels, looks down into His face, and loves. On the neighboring hill of Bethlehem the windows of the inns are aglow with light, and across the valley float the sounds of revelry, but Mary, blind and deaf to lights and revelry, still kneels, looks down into His face, and loves. And now hours have passed (oh, they were moments all too brief for her!). The windows of the inns are dark, their music is dead, and their guests have long been slumbering. Joseph still stands lovingly absorbed, the little servant maid is cold, but glad. And the two dumb beasts, according to a quaint tradition, with bowed heads are on their knees, and stillness holds the air. The Holy Night is near its end. The stars are sinking in the West. The first faint gleams of morning are showing in the East, and Bethlehem begins to stir. Suddenly the garish light of day smites irreverently the still darkness of the Holy Night. Men rise from their beds to eat and drink, to love, and

work, and play, the same to-day as yesterday, as if nothing had happened in the night, and there in the chill light of morning, Mary still kneels, looks down into His face, adores, and loves. *She* looks down into His face, *He* looks up into her face; and in that mutual gaze there is happiness enough for both of them forever! Yes, that is the secret of it all—His look and hers! Without Him the stable would have been intolerable to her, but with His beauty in her soul, the austerity of the stable was as nothing. If you exclude Christ from your life, the hardships of life will conquer you; but if you let Him be the center of your thoughts and love, the painfulness of life will become bearable and sweet. Thus far the vision in the Casa Nova of the Franciscans!

Glory and thanks to the God of mercy and Father of all consolations, who deigned by the light of a flaming star to lead three wise men to the feet of the Incarnate Son of God! Thanks for the loyalty with which they coursed on camels across desert sands to their destination! For the faith wherewith they recognized Thee, Eternal God, in the form of a poor Infant; and thanks for their adoration, love, joy and gifts!

"When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came three wise men from the east to Jerusalem." There is an air of Oriental mystery about their advent and the locality whence they came, reminding one of a trinity of comets, trailing fire, sweeping into our suburban planetary system from remote depths of space, and after a brief obeisance to the sun, going back, as strangely as they had come—to nowhere! We know nothing of their history until they appeared saying: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" We first discern them dimly on the eastern horizon, swaying on three ships of the desert, plowing a sea of sand. Perhaps they were seers, learned in celestial lore, who from their high and lonely towers in some exotic land, had for years been studying the motion of the stars. And lo! one night a new star flamed into their vision, an omen boding something strange and wonderful; and with it a divine intuition flamed into their souls that they should follow the harbinger of mystery to some unknown, but glorious destiny. Other astronomers, no doubt, had also seen the star, but wise in their own conceit, staying at home, may be

had ridiculed the three enthusiasts for setting out to course a will-o'-the-wisp. But Melchior, Balthasar, and Caspar, converging singly from their separate countries to the desert, may have met there and taken courage from their companionship and identical quest. "We have seen His star in the East," they said to Herod, "and are come to adore Him." "And King Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with Him." He feared for His throne. But Christ was a spiritual, not an earthly King. "Assembling together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born;" not indeed, that he might adore Him but, as the slaughter of the Innocents was to show, that he might kill Him. But they said to him: "In Bethlehem of Juda; for so it is written by the prophets: And thou Bethlehem the land of Juda art not the least of the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel." How well they knew of Christ, but how ill they were to treat Him! Contrarywise, the three kings, though ignorant of the prophecies of Christ, wished earnestly to honor Him. And "hav-

ing heard the King, they went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over [the place] where the child was; and seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored Him."

The call of the wise men was symbolic of the vocation to the faith of the gentiles in general and learned men in particular; and their ready response prefigured the acceptance of the faith by gentile nations and wise men of future centuries.

And so I see in imagination slaves and aristocrats of Rome under the leadership of St. Peter; the learned and ignorant of the Isles of Greece with St. Paul at their head; cultured and barbarous men of Spain following St. James; Orientals accepting the leadership of St. John and St. Thomas; and in later centuries the Irish under St. Patrick, the English under St. Augustine, the French under St. Remigius, Germans under St. Boniface, East Indians under St. Francis Xavier, Negroes under St. Peter Claver, North American Indians under Jogues and

Brebeuf, Lallemant and Garnier;—I see them all with their eyes fixed upon the star, leaving their ancient darkness, traversing desert sands of hardship to the crib and offering the Child their gifts; the gold of their charity for His kingship, the frankincense of prayerful adoration for His priesthood and Divinity, and the myrrh of mortification for His mortal Humanity.

And the Child rewarded their faith, heroic endeavor, and generosity. For from victims of pagan superstitions, devil worship, and unnatural lusts, they became children of God and brothers of Christ. The pessimism, despair, and fatalism of ancient cults were supplanted by the radiant hope of a new spiritual dawn. Womanhood, childhood, and the home, which had been in dishonor, through the Mother and Child were glorified. Lowliness, suffering, and poverty, which had been stigmas, became respectable and even desirable. A code of pure morality replaced the former rule of license. Slavery was abolished, and comfortable living was made possible for laboring men. A better understanding sprang up between rich and poor. The horrors of war were mitigated. Peace dawned upon the world. Men began

to love one another. Civilization and culture, the fruits of true religion, beautified the earth. And joy expanded the hearts of men. Oh, the days of Faith, how glorious they were! And how exhilarating the sight of nations pouring in like floods of muddy water to be transformed and clarified at the feet of the Child!

Isaias of old saw the vision of it all and addressing Jerusalem exclaimed: "Arise, Jerusalem, and shed thy splendor; for the glory of the Lord is upon thee. Lift up thy eyes and behold all the peoples coming to thee, multitudes from across the sea, the strength of the gentiles. A very flood of camels will encompass thee; dromedaries of Madian and Epha; yes, and from Saba will they come, kings of Tharsis and the Islands, Kings of Araby and Epha, with loads of gold and incense, chanting the glory of the Lord."

How puny and inconsiderable are these days of skepticism, indifference, and denial, without the wise men, without the star, without the gold, frankincense, and myrrh, in comparison with those days of faith, charity, and glowing hope at the crib of the Child?

And the devotees of learning, culture, and art were in the camel-train leading to the crib.

Nothing is farther from the truth than the prevalent belief that learning and culture are irreconcilable with faith. For back through the centuries to the time of Christ the majority of artists, philosophers, and scientists have been Christian men.

While viewing masterpieces of painting, and sculpture last year in European galleries I thought of the hold which the Christian masters had gotten upon so many men of genius. For the best art of the Christian era has been inspired by the thought of Christ, His mother and the saints. I thought also of the great composers and realized that the best part of their music expressed the beauty of Christian truths. While I stood in the shadow of the Cathedrals of Notre Dame, Westminister, Reims, and Milan, I conjured up before my imagination swarms of workingmen and architects of the Middle Ages throughout Europe, who with creative genius, artistic fineness, and loving tenderness brought into being those Gothic poems in stone for the glory of Christ. I remembered the towering poets and orators of nine-

teen hundred years who, though not always in the morality of their lives, yet at least in faith had followed the star. It was the same story, though in a minor degree, of the philosophers. And I reflected that the records of the physical sciences are replete with the names of men who found it quite easy to reconcile science and faith. I thought of Pasteur especially, who once said: "I have the faith of a Breton peasant, and with God's grace I hope some day to have the faith of a Breton peasant's wife."

Those men saw that the physical world manifests the glory of the Creator; that Revelation and science are mutually complementary; that what is *beyond* reason need not be *against* reason; that the lowering of the Almighty to the condition of human flesh is not absurd, and that, though we must accept the words of a Divine Revealer blindly because they are true and infinitely wise, we may and must nevertheless examine by the light of reason the evidence for His claim to Divinity. And so they also in humility and deep tenderness have knelt at the crib.

But once upon a time, sad to say, three wise men (sophisticated philosophers and

theologians, wise in their own conceit) closed their eyes to the star, denied that Godhead resides in the Child, took back from Him their gifts of frankincense, and, mounting their camels, withdrew from the glory of the crib into the ancient darkness of the Orient, whence they had come. Those three were Arius, Nestorius, and Eutyches, the arch-heretics.

Even before their time some individuals had rejected the truth that Christ is God. When Christ claimed Godhead for Himself, the Jews said: "Now we know that thou hast a devil,' and threatened to kill Him. When He proclaimed His Divinity before Caiphas, the High-priest rent His garment, crying: "He hath blasphemed; what think ye?" and they all answered: "He is guilty of death." Cerinthus claimed that Christ was only man. It was to confute this heretic that the beloved disciple wrote His gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

But Arius, Nestorius, and Eutyches were

the unholy three who drew such wide-spread ruin in their track across the whole face of Christendom that St. Jerome in his day could say: "The world woke up one morning and found itself Arian." Orthodox Christianity was hard pressed and many feared for its permanence. Emperors and courtiers, multitudes of the common people, large groups of learned men and even pastors of the Church were infected with the three heresies.

Arius was an ecclesiastic of the Church of Alexandria, who, with excessive Oriental subtlety of mind, tried to rationalize Christianity, and failing to justify by reason the God-head of Christ, denied it. The Bishop of Alexandria took alarm at his plausible arguments against the Incarnation and reported Arius to the Emperor. Arius at the feet of Constantine took an oath of loyalty to the creed (meaning, however, a copy of his own interpretation of the creed concealed in his sleeve). The Emperor was satisfied, and his sister even became a partisan of the heretic. But the champions of orthodoxy could not be deceived, and when the case of Arius came up again, he went to the Cathedral of Constantinople, followed by an en-

thusiastic crowd, to justify himself and triumph over his enemies; but suddenly and strangely he was smitten by God and perished like a dog in an alley on the way.

In the first ecumenical council held at Nice, in the beginning of the fourth century, the assembled Fathers, presided over by two deacons representing the Bishop of Rome, formally defined that Christ is very God. Many historical figures partook in the council, the most memorable of whom were Hosius of Cordoba, who had had a limb amputated for the faith; St. Nicholas of Myra, the original Santa Claus, and especially Athanasius, who on account of his twenty years' running fight against pursuing Arians, has been gloriously dubbed "*Athanasius contra mundum*" (Athanasius against the world). The Athanasian Creed though not written by him personally, was undoubtedly inspired by his teachings, and is a masterpiece of nice distinctions, as keen as a razor-edge by which he outdid Arius in his own art of subtle expression.

Protestants sometimes object to the subtlety of the Church. They call it cavilling, jesuitical juggling. But the Church does not love subtlety. She would like to kneel always

in holy contemplation and simplicity at the crib. Her enemies are the tricky casuists; and so she must rise from her knees and whip out her keen-edged rapier of controversy against them to defend the Child.

Shortly after the Nicene Council, Nestorius, who admitted the Divinity of Christ, was puzzled over the hypostatic union, and trying to explain it, denied it. He taught that in Christ there are not only two natures, the Human and Divine, but also two persons, the Divine and Human; and that the Divine and Human are not intimately united, but merely juxtaposed. Hence, according to Nestorius, Christ was not a unit, but a sort of monstrous duplex or twin monstrosity.

Two logical corollaries of his teaching are: First, the impossibility of Christ offering adequate atonement for sin; and, second, the purely human motherhood of Mary. Adequate atonement for sin must be infinite in value because sin, an offence perpetrated against God, a Person of infinite dignity, is infinite in offensiveness. But in the Nestorian doctrine Christ's atonement would be only finite. If, as the Catholic Church teaches, the Divine Person of Christ is in-

timately united to his finite Human Nature, then the finite actions of the latter are made morally infinite in atoning value by the indwelling Divine Personality. But if, on the contrary, as Nestorius taught, the Divine Personality is excluded by a Human personality from close union with the finite Human Nature of Christ, it follows that His Human actions remain finite, and thus adequate atonement for sin is impossible. For it must be remembered that Christ could not have atoned to His Father in His Divine Nature; for it would be impossible for Christ, *as God,* to submit to the humiliation necessary for the atonement of sin.

In matter of fact Mary was the mother of the God Christ because the body and soul to which she gave birth are intimately united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is evident, then, that if such a union did not exist in the Nestorian sense, Mary would be Mother only of the man Christ. At Ephesus, in the Third Ecumenical Council, the assembled Fathers declared against the Nestorian doctrine of two Persons and two Natures in Christ, that in Christ there are indeed two Natures, the Human and

Divine, linked, however, by only one Person, the Divine.

An interesting sidelight of this council, which showed the devotion of the people of those days to Mary and their zealous maintenance of her prerogative, was the multitude who waited for days and nights outside the council chamber for the declaration of Mary's relationship to the Son of God. When the door was opened and the herald proclaimed the decision of the Fathers, that Mary is truly the mother of God, a tremendous shout of approbation and joy went up from the waiting crowd, and all that night fires blazed and feasts were kept in honor of the woman above all women whom the people loved.

A half century later, Eutyches wishing to avoid the error of Nestorius, went too far in the opposite direction by teaching that in our Saviour there is only one Person, the Divine and also only one Nature,—a sort of fusion of the human and divine. According to Eutyches, therefore, Christ is neither distinctly God nor distinctly man, but a composite of both.

At Chalcedon the Fathers of the Fourth

Ecumenical Council declared that, although the two Natures of Christ are intimately united by the Divine Personality, yet they retain, unmingled and unconfused, their respective clearcut identity.

So we see that while three wise men of a sort (sophisticated theologians, Magi, wise in their own conceit,) closed their eyes to the star, denied that Divinity resides in the Child, withdrew their gift of frankincense from Him, and, mounting their camels, receded from the glory of the crib into the ancient darkness of the Orient whence they had come; a fourth Wise One, the Church has always kept her station with the three kings in love and adoration at the feet of the Christ Child.

Modernists say that the Church is old-fashioned. Yes, She is as old-fashioned and as old as the three Wise Men. Meanwhile Modernists, who boast of their modernity, are only imitators of three ancient heretics long since discredited. They say the Church is not progressive, but retrogressive. Yes, she will not progress away from the crib, but is always going back in thought to the Child. They say she is intolerant and pugnacious. Yes, she will not tolerate any derogation

from Christ's Divinity; and she is pugnacious. But she fights not for herself, but for that dear doctrine of the Incarnation, once committed to her charge. They say that her teaching is monotonous. Yes, she knows only one lesson and sings only one song,—the lesson and song of the One Beloved. They say she is wooden and narrow. But so also was the crib that held the Lord! And why should *wooden* be a term of reproach? Wood is firm and inflexible. And narrow? Why truth itself is narrow; as narrow as a line; as narrow even as a point. For truth is one and indivisible; while error is manifold, spacious, and broad. Truth is like the bull's eye of a target; error like the rings around it. The bull's eye is unique; the rings can be multiplied *ad infinitum.* Only an expert archer can hit the center, but any novice in archery can strike within the rings. And why should the Church's enemies abuse her because, with her sighting eye narrowed down even to a pinpoint, she lets fly her feathered shaft and hits it? Finally, they say she is uninteresting and drab. But I tell you, brethren, that the consistent and stubborn maintenance of an ancient and true doctrine is far more thrilling than

clever and brilliant attempts to discredit it. The Church at least is always defending, preserving, and building. Her enemies only knock and destroy. So while Modernists are using their best talents and writing clever books to reduce Christ to purely human proportions, let us be glad and proud to take our place with the three Wise Men and the Church at the Crib, offering our gift of frankincense to Almighty God in the humble but charming guise of a Babe.

III

THE YOUNG TEMPLAR

One bright morning in spring, Joseph, Mary, and the Child Jesus went up from Nazareth to the Temple at Jerusalem. The sun shone more brilliantly, the grass was of a more vivid green, birds sang more cheerily, the flowers breathed forth their fragrance more refreshingly than usual for their passing.

The Divine Boy speeds along with the alacrity of youth. Joseph feels a new vitality in his veins, and Mary's heart sings blithely, as she goes up the road to the Holy City. Oh, how that bird song will be quenched in the mute cage of her heart ere three days will have passed!

The threefold purpose of Jesus's visit to the Temple was: first, to adore God publicly in a magnificent temple, as a lesson for us; Secondly, to preach for our inspiration and enlightenment; Third, to be lost, at the price of great sorrow to His mother, in order that

men who lose Christ might learn from her how to feel the loss.

I read a statement from a Protestant Minister in London last October, to the effect that Christians of to-day ought to get back to the devotion of the Middle Ages. I think he meant to censure the engrossment of contemporary Christians in the service of man and their neglect of God. And certainly one does hear much at present of the love of the neighbor, but little of the love of God. And even when men do pray to God, numbers of them are sensitive about doing so in public. They seem to imagine that public prayer savours of hypocrisy and ostentation, and detracts from that individual intimacy of communion with the Godhead which would seem to be the choicest experience of the soul. Such men justify private, as opposed to public, devotion in church by Christ's approving prophecy that the true servants of God in the New Testament would not adore Him in houses of wood and stone, but in spirit and truth. They deprecate especially architectural magnificence in church edifices and ceremonial display. To their mind ritualism is a form of superstition; pictures, statues, and stained glass

windows with haloed saints are relics of idolatry; flowers, vestments, incense, and candle lights are concessions to childish instincts unworthy of men; and music is a sensuous profanation of the holy Place. Had they lived in the twelfth century, they would have been iconoclasts with Leo the Isaurian. Had they lived in the sixteenth century, they would have mutilated gorgeous cathedrals with numbers of vandalistic Reformers, substituting for them meeting-houses of prayer as bleak and austere as their prosaic piety.

The Church counteracts this individualistic, stern, and unpoetical form of religion by adoring in public with imaginative and emotional appeal, in magnificent ecclesiastical edifices, to the accompaniment of elaborate ceremonial. One of the features of the Catholic Church is adoration. She serves man to the best of her power, but she serves God first, because He is the sovereign Lord from whom all things come, to whom all honor is due; and because without regard for Him fraternal charity degenerates into a form of soulless humanitarianism and philanthropy. From the rising to the setting of the sun her priests offer up the sacrifice of the Mass and say the Office for an hour every

day in united praise. In some countries they are in their chill stalls in the middle of the night, shattering the darkness with chanted music and welcoming the golden light of morning with golden psalms.

Priests and people of the Old Testament adored and praised the God of nature who created the universe and the God of Israel, "Jehovah," who had shown His mercy by delivering Noe from the flood; by guiding the destinies of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; by leading His people from the bondage of Egypt under the guidance of Moses, by glorifying them with the splendid reigns of David and Solomon, and enriching them with prophetic utterances from Juda to Malachias.

Priests and people of the New Testament adore and praise the God of love in human form through the mounting glories of His goodness from the stable and the crib to the Cross, resplendent sepulchre, and everlasting throne. What a record of divine beneficence requiring rememberance, adoration, praise, and love! Can anyone say now that Catholics go to church too much and practice the virtue of religion to excess?

And the Church has always believed in the

potency of united multitudes at prayer. She remembers the Lord's words: "Where there are two gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Will He not, therefore, be more intimately present to a vast congregation on its knees than to an individual praying at home alone? A gigantic chorus is more sublime than one singer, no matter how superb his voice may be. And so, the choral prayer of many, rumbling and crackling, must assail the ears of the Deity with more compelling eloquence than the supplication of one man, even though he be a saint. Several times every Sunday morning thousands are present at the foot of the altar, hearing Mass in unison. There they are—rich and poor; lowly and great; cultured and ignorant; those whom the world esteems and those whom it ignores; forgetting their secular differences, remembering only their common identity in the brotherhood of Christ, the sonship of God, the heritage of sorrow, the stigma of sin, and the hope of everlasting life.

Fraternal charity is the fulfillment of the law. But fraternal charity is fostered by unity in prayer; whereas aloofness from the so-called common herd and excessive indi-

viduality of devotion engender and promote spiritual conceit. No man can "go it alone" in human affairs, much less in divine. Commonly heretics who in times past broke away from the Christian communion, had first tried to mount to the gates of Heaven, prayerfully, on isolated wings; meanwhile looking down with a sense of mystical superiority upon the mass of men kneeling on the common ground.

The Church does not oppose individual prayer. Indeed, no other religious establishment can show a more brilliant array of mystics, like Francis of Assisi for example, who were often absorbed in rapturous intimacy with God, with all of a lover's exclusive singleness of devotion. But those Saints were preëminently members of a community first; and their personal piety was exceptional and secondary to their communal prayer.

And in order that public prayer may be offered with due magnificence, the Church has reared her Cathedrals in every clime, has embroidered her vestments of more than regal beauty, has employed the sensuous appeal of lights, incense, flowers, music, jewels, and precious plate; and originated the

stately services of the sanctuary. For it is becoming, she thinks, that art as well as nature should glorify God. Rivers, mountains, oceans, valleys, and skies sing the praises of their Maker: Why should not poetry, music, oratory, architecture, painting, and sculpture, do the same?

But Christ also, *as Man,* should have a share in the praises of art. When He walked the earth, He possessed nothing of the beauty of art; we ought to lavish it upon Him now. *Then* nothing was too poor for Him; *now* nothing should be too rich for Him. *Then* he lived in a cottage; *now* we should wish Him to reside in a basilica. *Then* plain clothes were His portion; *now* we should encompass Him with silks and laces, imperial purple and cloth of gold.

But over and beyond the consideration of God's glory and Christ's is that of the requirements of men. If we were pure spirits, we would not stand in need of artistic helps. But being creatures of body and soul, of senses, imagination and feelings, as well as of mind, we can not be potently affected by purely spiritual truths; we must be allured by color, sound, and scent to the love of the God of color, sound, and scent. Moreover,

we must all have beauty in our lives; and if our esthetic and amative sense is starved in a barren and unlovely church, it will seek gratification elsewhere; outside the church, outside religion, and outside the law. The devil draws men into sin by beauty: Why should not the Church captivate them for God by loveliness?

This then is the Church's attitude towards adoration of God in public with the aid of architectural appeal.

For all this her model was Christ. For instead of remaining at home with Mary and Joseph, enjoying the luxury and exclusiveness of private prayer, Christ at the age of twelve went up with His parents to mingle with all sorts of the populace in common adoration in the Temple of Jerusalem.

Let us not be too retired, isolated, and intellectual in our devotion, but let us often praise and glorify God in public, with multitudes, surrounded by ecclesiastical art and loveliness. And that we may succeed in doing this more easily, let us in imagination, often kneel with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in the Temple, trying to catch their spirit, explore their thoughts, sense their petitions,

and imitate their prostrate devotion to the God of justice and love.

Besides adoration, Christ in visiting the Temple had in mind the office of preaching. We read in Holy Writ that the Ancients of the Temple, Scribes, hoary with age and dim-eyed with study, marvelled at the wisdom of that Child of twelve. You may have seen the picture of Him;—His boyish brow radiant with divine intelligence, His eyes speaking eloquently, His lips rich with inspiration, His finger pointing to the holy text; and those old men enraptured; one holding his chin and stroking his beard thoughtfully, another looking admiringly at the young Templar before him, and still another, wondering who this new Teacher can be.

This was Christ's initial effort as a Preacher of the Word. In later years He was to illumine, inspire, and set aflame the populace as He was now doing to this little group:—on the mount amid verdure, flowers, and singing birds, at the side of a stream beneath the blue sky, drawing His illustrations from lilies of the valley and birds of the air, setting forth eternal principles of

His Kingdom in simple, compelling words, pregnant with significance: on the shore of the sea, from a boat enmeshing the crowd in the net of His beautiful speech: in synagogues, opening the Holy Book and suffusing its plain text with the golden aura of His explanation: or in the porches of the Temple, with dagger thrusts of divine vituperation excoriating the guilty, or with sweet words of consolation mending broken hearts and revivifying lost hopes. Afterwards He would magnetize also small groups and individuals:—the Samaritan woman at the well; St. Andrew spending a whole heavenly day in Christ's house, so rapt at His utterances that when he came out into the street again, all he could say was: "We have found the Messiah"; Mary, the sister of Martha, sitting absorbed at His feet; Nicodemus with Him at night, listening spell-bound to the story of His Kingdom; and the twelve at the Last Supper, the night before He died, silent and melted to awe and tenderness by that superbest of all His sermons, the rhapsody on love. Of all this many-colored eloquence of His maturer years He gave the world an initial taste in the Temple at the age of twelve, "when all

that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and answers."

Christ was many things: the Founder of an imperial regime, His Church with its juridical head and subsidiary officers, and a visible though spiritual power of command; a Priest, who instituted a perennial sacrifice of bread and wine, Sacraments, and a system of prayer; a Lover, who would enter into intimate communion with individual souls; a Soldier, who would lead the way to immortal victories; an Atoner, who would purify the world with His blood; and a Preacher, who would exercise the divine art of illuminating and enthralling.

As a Preacher, Christ never condescended to make a utilitarian appeal. Nor did He elaborate a speculative system of philosophy, like Plato and Aristotle among the Greeks. Nor even in the sphere of conduct was He satisfied with instilling merely natural principles of ethics, with their insufficiency for fallen nature, as did the pagan Stoics and Epicureans. But He drew His lessons from the Inspired Book; from supernatural Revelation, with its keener light shed upon human obligations and its more potent helps for those who wish to be good.

To crown all, rising above the sphere of mere duty to the higher level of free service, He inculcated the chief lessons of His coming: the love of God and man; enforcing them by a captivating example. And all these lessons, Christ taught and exemplified with a human sweetness, forcefulness, imaginative coloring, warmth of emotion, simplicity and majesty, which were surpassed only by the divine power lying behind His human qualities.

Christ has had imitators and successors in His juridical power in the Popes and Bishops of the Church; in His sacerdotal power, in the person of His priests. As a Lover, a Soldier, and an Atoner, He has been imitated by the saints, who have loved, fought, and atoned for humanity. But also His preaching power has been exemplified in men like St. John Chrysostom, St. Bernard, Bossuet, and Bourdalou, who caught some of the Master's glow, directness, sweetness, and sublimity.

We ought not to exaggerate the ruling and priestly power in the Church, and Christ's secret personal influence upon souls as a Lover, a Soldier, and an Atoner, to the neglect of the office of preaching. True, there can be no kingdom of Christ without juris-

diction, command, and obedience. True, there can be no continued priesthood of Christ without Mass and the Sacraments. True, there can be no possibility of pleasing God without personal love, soldierly courage, and atoning penance. But it is equally true, as St. Paul says, that there can be no beginning, and especially no large growth of faith, without preaching. Oftentimes Catholics avoid sermons. Let them remember that, although a priest be an unfinished speaker, yet power goes out from him. For the efficacy of the Word does not depend so much upon the speaker's personal gifts, as upon his office.

But, of course, the chief representative and successor of the preaching Christ is the Church herself.

The Church is not an original speaker. For, far from originating anything, she only explains in an impersonal way objective traditional truths. The Church is not a novel speaker; for she delves among doctrines coated with the noble rust of 2,000 years. The Church is not an imaginative speaker; for her purpose is to set forth Christ's teachings with unadorned, but unmistakable clearness and exactness of expression. The Church is not a speaker with personality, as

they call it; for her utterances generally are the composite speech of many sedate bishops. The Church is not an emotional speaker; for her design is not to excite the feelings and persuade to action, but to elucidate texts and convince the intellect. I am referring, of course, to the Church teaching excathedra from her seat of infallibility for the whole world. In that capacity she is not precisely an imitator of the preaching Christ, much less a substitute for Him; but she is an interpreter of Him with regard to those parts of His speech in which, on account of our restricted intelligence, interpretation is a necessity. Hence, her dogmatic statements are pre-eminently clear, pointed, and practical. They are characterized by majesty, reserve, and unimpassioned dignity and are models of a magisterial and insistent loftiness.

Let us read them and listen to them, not indeed as if they should supplant the natural unstudied eloquence of Christ, but in order that, through their interpretative light, we may learn to know what Christ truly meant; and so, safe from the likelihood and danger of misunderstanding Him, we may sit with the multitude enraptured at His feet, or

in the more select company of the Scribes and Priests of the Temple, allow our minds to be permeated by the radiance, our hearts to be steeped in the unction, our wills to be vitalized by the energy, and our whole character to be sweetened by the kindness which proceed from His Sacred Heart, through His dear lips, for all who wish to be enlightened, softened, sweetened, strengthened, and enriched.

Christ was lost in Jerusalem, thereby causing His mother excessive grief: "Son why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The divine purpose of the loss of Christ bore upon Mary as an individual and upon all of us in general. Mary was to lose her Child later, when at the age of thirty He left her roof to preach to the world, and in a more poignant sense at the age of thirty-three, when He died on Calvary. Had she been subjected to those two gruelling experiences without preparation, they might have been too severe for her strength. So Almighty God in His mercy gave her a taste of the bitter cup of separation in Christ's boyhood days, in order that, having been initiated into the pangs of loss, she might later on, in

the most crucial moments of her martyrdom, be able to drain the chalice of dereliction to the dregs.

The salvation of men was the all engrossing purpose of Christ's coming, and vocational parting from His mother was a necessary condition of His ministry. In comparison with His Messianic work, His domestic ties however sweet, tender, and constraining, were of little value. Had He always remained at home in exquisite communion with that incomparable woman, the world would not have been saved. Mary naturally expostulated with her son with a degree of maternal authority. Whereupon Jesus, suddenly doffing His character of human dependence and expanding to the stature and proportions of Divinity, forgetting His twelve years and remembering His eternity, power, and mission from His Father to men, said to her, speaking down from the heights to a creature: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" That was an additional stab; for, though "they understood not the words that he spoke unto them," yet she must have dimly sensed the sorrows which His divine vocation would involve for Him and herself.

The world was lost through a man and woman, and it was to be saved by *the* Man and *the* Woman. The charm of Christ's manhood, along with the complementary graces of Mary's womanhood, was to inveigle us into the love of God. She shared in His glories. He became the Son of Man; she was made the Mother of God. He required to be born of sinless flesh; and she was conceived immaculate. His companionship at home was to be spotless; and so her life was without blemish. He was virginal; and she shared in that attribute. He was to be the Brother of Men; and she the Mother of Men. He was to be King of Heaven; and she to be crowned Queen of angels and saints.

But she partook also of His sorrows and disgrace. She had already endured pangs with Him, fleeing into Egypt from the sword of Herod slaughtering the Innocents; and when, on presenting Him in the Temple, she had heard the words of Simeon "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce." In future days she would stand mourning at the foot of the Cross and bury Him with black abandon-

ment. But now the third sword is in her breast for His loss.

Every man, distraught, who visions the Man of Sorrows, finds assuagement of desolation. Every broken-hearted woman who contemplates the image of the Mater Dolorosa, experiences the comfort of companionship in grief.

The modern world has lost its faith in Christ, but is far from grieving at the loss. Outside the Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and a few rather limited conservative Protestant groups, belief in Christ's Divinity has perished. So-called Liberals, whether they be Humanists, who, enamoured of the noble naturalness of Renan's portrayal of Christ, are pleased to see only a man in the Son of God; or Agnostics, who, ignorant of the Divinity in general, cannot conceive the idea of God in human flesh; or Rationalists, who, rejecting the fact and possibility of miracles whereby Christ's Divinity is established, logically reject His Divinity; or Modernists, who, limiting Revelation to internal personal experience, cannot find therein evidence of the Godhead of Christ; or the ignorant, who, through lack of reading and thought on the subject,

simply do not know the truths which establish that Christ is God; or the faint-hearted, who in their diffidence think that the Incarnation is too good to be true, regarding it as a poetical fancy, a gilded fairy tale or divine romance, unfounded in fact;—Liberals, I say, of these or other shades, have lost Christ.

But far from grieving over the dissipation of a belief which required nearly 2,000 years of preaching, prayers, tears, and martyrdoms for its establishment, they complacently try to satisfy themselves with a variety of terrestrial avocations and activities, as if these earthly values could be a sufficient answer to the needs of the human race, any more than they were in the pagan world, whose dry rot had to be vitalized by the doctrine of Christ's Divinity. Moreover, they laugh at those who still hold that Christ is very God and regard their pure and sublime doctrine as a superstition, benighted and dull.

Mary was broken-hearted at the loss of Christ, but Liberals are rather proud of their loss.

Other groups of men who lose Christ are those who, though still holding the faith,

commit mortal sin; those who, though not guilty of grave sin, have lost the spirit of Christ; and those who, though not bereft of His spirit, have been deprived of His consolations. It is of the last-named group that I wish to speak.

Spiritual consolation in general consists in a special illumination, fervor, or enjoyment of peace from on high; a conscious increase in the theological or moral virtues; satisfaction in God's service; elation at the prospect of Heaven; a felt hatred of sin.

Genuine consolations from God are often indistinguishable from movements that come naturally from ourselves or from the evil spirit. But by taking proper precautions,—for instance, by observing the occasions of our thoughts, by foreseeing the good or evil effects which would follow from them, and especially by seeking competent spiritual direction,—one can generally discover with a high degree of probability which ideas and emotions descend from on high and which ascend from our own souls or the infernal pit.

Consolation is very useful in the spiritual life. Therefore, it should be prayed for

and sought after earnestly and preserved with the utmost care. Therefore, also, it is reasonable to grieve to some extent over its loss, should it be withdrawn. But consolation is not at all necessary in the spiritual life. Indeed, at times the privation of it is useful. For this reason excessive grief at its loss is not commendable.

The ordinary reasons why God withholds or withdraws His consolations are: To convince us that they are gratuitous things, which cannot be merited or retained by any effort of our own; to save us from the likelihood and danger of basking in the sunshine of God's favor complacently; to prevent the sinews of our soul from softening from too much pleasure and ease; to make us fall back on the exercise of our natural powers of intellect and will, unaided by those very special helps from on high; to keep us from the temptation of looking down with a superior air from the supposed heights of our intimacy with God upon those who, bereft of God's sweetness, stumble along in desolation of spirit; to show us that being consoled does not mean being holy, and that desolation is not a sign of inferior sanctity;

indeed, that God's favorites taste bitterness frequently enough, while novices in the spiritual life are often soothed and enspirited by the Holy Ghost precisely because they are not strong enough to love Him without His indulgence and caresses; to teach us the lesson of sympathy with the distraught, —a compassionate sentiment which is the exclusive product of personal dereliction of soul; to test us and discover whether we are serving God magnanimously for Himself or only selfishly for His gifts.

When, without fault of our own, we are deprived of the sweet visitations of the Lord, it becomes us to be humble and patient; most of all not to be hopeless, listless, or inert. But just as Mary, on discovering the loss of Jesus, forthwith hurried back to Jerusalem, seeking Him energetically, and especially looking for Him in the Temple, so we ought to put aside our lethargy and, girding ourselves for a long hopeful quest, pursue Him relentlessly with dogged and unremitting perseverance, by working, by weeping, by fasting, and especially by praying in the Temple before the Blessed Sacrament for His return to us. Then just as Mary found Him and went down happily with

Him to their home at Nazareth, so we shall recover his consolations and suffuse our souls with them.

Yes, I see the radiant rapture in her face when she finds the lost One. Everything else is forgotten. The Temple melts into nothingness around her. Priests and people disappear. The sun and earth are no more. The only thing is her Boy. With Him she walks lightly out through the porches of the holy place, through the streets of Jerusalem, and down the road to Nazareth. The city recedes into the distance and becomes a blur behind them as they go. The wide road stretches up hill and down grade ahead of them. Their cottage shows afar. Moonlight is upon it now. It seems to slumber in its snug recess by the wayside. She approaches it, opens the door, and enters to spend with Him some eighteen years before the commencement of His public life. Oh, those years of heavenly companionship! Oh, the continued presence of that Divine and human Son! His looks, His conversation, His love and courteous regard for her, His prayer at her side to the Heavenly Father! What rapturous years when, as Scripture says, "He went down to Nazareth and was

subject to them"! Was it not worth her while to have borne the sorrow of losing Him for three days, that she might be rewarded with the prolonged delight of finding and possessing Him? Yes, for the possession of Christ is everything. Without Christ the world and all its pleasures are a hollow mockery. With Christ all is well, even though poverty and sorrow be our lot. Let us hold fast to Christ at any cost by keeping our faith in His Divinity; by avoiding mortal sin; by fostering His spirit in our life, and by enjoying His sensible consolations in so far as it is permissible. Then we shall possess that "peace on earth" which he came to give,—a foretaste of the delight which shall be ours in the heavenly cottage above, where Mary and all the blessed will share His company, not only for eighteen years, shadowed by the great impending Tragedy, but blissfully for ever.

IV

THE VISION OF HORROR

Mental suffering is an experience more trying than bodily pain. Worriment, grief, fear, anxiety, doubt, aversion, horror about the past, present or future;—about past misdeeds, present adversity or future threatening calamity—these interior conditions of the soul cause more anguish than wounds of the flesh. Who has not had experience of them? Who, therefore, cannot bear witness to the truth of what I say? When a soldier in the charge is exalted with high thoughts of patriotism and victory, he scarcely feels the bullet that pierces or the sword that slashes him. But when he looks across a field of defeat, thickly strewn with dead fellow soldiers, his heart breaks with grief, though his body be intact. A happy mind is a counteractant to a suffering body; but physical well-being cannot allay mental distress. The soul is finer than the body; therefore, a thrust at it is more keenly felt and more

slowly cured. The very life of the soul consists in the perception and enjoyment of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Take these three things away from it, and it tastes a living death; and these three things vanish under the cloud of interior anguish.

There are, no doubt, moments in the lives of all of us when a prone passivity loosens all the sinews of the soul; the will seems to jellify; black melancholy saturates the blood; imagination is deprived of its imagery; memory loses its pleasant recollections; speech, its vivacity; and the countenance, its radiance; all spiritual lights are extinguished; all supernatural warmth is chilled; the blood lags in the veins, the step is heavy; the spirit is weighted down; our faces are in the dust, we are flattened to the ground; there are no tears to bring relief; no outburst of passionate sorrow to break the dull monotony of depression; and (so it seems) we cannot rise, face the world, and march on. In such a mood Newman once muttered: "Why, do I cumber the earth?" Job cursed the day he was born; and the melancholy character of the play exclaimed:

"Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,
How weary, stale, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world."

The causes of such a prostrate condition of mind are various. Sin, natural character, certain humors of the body; misfortune, sickness, death in the family, thwarted ambition, disappointed love, poverty, broken friendship, domestic chaos, excessive work, or empty purposelessness of life, poor and insufficient nourishment, a lack of fresh air, sunshine and exercise; a withdrawal from the soul of the sense of the presence and friendship of God;—these are the principle sources to which spiritual desolation can be traced.

It is a most dangerous condition of the mind. The prophet says: "Sadness gnaweth at the heart." If we give way to it, it spoils our whole life, embarrasses our friends, brings the religion we practice into disrepute, and is a reflection on the good God whom the pessimist regards as a heartless and even tyrannical Lord.

But if taken in hand and mastered, it refines and beautifies the suffering soul. There

is nothing more ennobling. It cleanses dross from character like fire. Unbroken interior comfort arrays us in a superficial attractiveness; hardens us and panders to selfishness. But the other thing steeps the soul in a superhuman charm, sweetness, and strength. History proves this, and perhaps our own experience testifies that we have grown more in one week's sorrow, well or even half-well borne, than in years of sunny experiences. This world is a valley of tears. Tears are bitter, but they sweeten us; the crushed rose is the most fragrant; and the violin makes men's souls ache with its most exquisite singing when the vibrant sinews of its anguished spirit are strained almost to the snapping-point, then pressed and plucked, stricken and slashed by a merciless hand with its bow.

A violin is a magical instrument, with a heart full of passionate pain. But the human soul is even a more magical instrument. Judge, then, what must have been the soul of Christ, so exquisitely delicate and refined, so swept by the cruel hand of pain, so anguished in its utterances in the shadows of the olive grove, so potent to penetrate the core of our souls with its yearnings. We

catch only intermittent, momentary snatches of His lamenting, on the First Holy Thursday night, through the few cries that crossed His lips, like gusts of plaintive music from an organ, heard outside through a cathedral door-way, which is opened for a moment, and then closed. These can help us to understand. However, we can never wholly understand, just as we in America can never wholly understand from the occasional glimpses we got of the European tragedy what was the length and breadth and depth of its miseries. A war was waged on the battle-field of Christ's heart on Holy Thursday night, more tremendous, more livid, more replete with malice against Him, more unbearable in its sufferings for Him, more magnificently endured by Him, farther reaching in its beneficent effects upon us, than all the wars of the world. Do you think I exaggerate? Read the Evangelists. Read the story of the Agony. Few words, but infinite suggestiveness!

When Jesus had finished the Last Supper, He arose and, followed by His disciples, went out to the garden of Gethsemane.

Suddenly and strangely, on the very threshold of the house, He begins to be heavy

and grows sad. Let us follow Him as He passes through the streets of Jerusalem, leaves the city by the southern gate, and makes His way eastward toward the olive trees. What a contrast between His appearance now and a few moments ago! For then His cheeks were aglow, His eyes were bright, His voice was vibrant as He spoke to the disciples, in the upper chamber, of love. But now He is haggard and pale; His face is drawn; His look is dull; black rings are under His eyes, His lips are colorless, His body is trembling and His step is faltering. He seems to have lost His hold on things. He seems to have lost His hold on Himself! And the fearful and significant looks which the Apostles exchange, reveal the excess of their astonishment.

He leaves eight of His Apostles in the outskirts of the olive grove, and with the other three proceeds toward the interior. At a given place He bids them wait; then, alone, He enters the heart of the grove.—Think of the stillness, the chill, the darkness, the forbidding blackness of this recess! *He* feels it all. For He looks around Him shrinkingly; He fears; a tremor runs through His frame; He sinks to His knees; then falls with out-

stretched arms flat upon His face. The olive trees look down on Him; a dead leaf loosens from its stem and flutters to His side. An owl, open-eyed, stares wondering what this means. The night winds hold their breath; and ground-squirrels steal out of their holes to gaze at the strange sight of the King of Heaven in the dust. Who can describe that prolonged period of writhing, silent anguish!

Suddenly, unable to bear any more, He rises to His knees and, raising His woeful eyes to the pitiless sky, sends forth a cry that shivers to the stars: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!"—this vision of to-morrow's sufferings and disgrace, this vision of My death, this vision of the sins and sufferings of men!

After a comfortless visit to His disciples, whom alas! He finds asleep, Jesus returns to the horrible tree and goes through a second and like agony, this time unto the sweating of blood. Distraught, He stumbles toward His disciples again, for some poor comfort from them; but even this solace is not afforded Him, for they are asleep. Alone, carrying the world's sorrows and sins alone, He goes back for the third and last

time to the charge. At the end, an Angel comes to strengthen Him and, rising to His feet like a giant in His new-born might, He marches forth upon the public stage of the world tragedy.

What was the horrid vision which Christ saw: a vision, the endurance of which made the physical sufferings of the following day a matter of comparative ease? He saw sin in its native enormity, affixed to Himself. He saw the fruitlessness of His death in the souls of myriads. He saw the suffering of the faithful, entailed by their fidelity to His cause; He saw the horrors of Good Friday.

Sin in its malice, offensiveness, guilt, and retributive deserts, is the worst of all evils. It seems not such to us. But He saw it that night, twenty centuries ago, undisguised, stripped, in its stark repulsiveness. The sins of all times were around Him and upon Him and in Him. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrha, of Babylon, Assyria, Rome, and Greece; the sins of all future ages; your sins and mine. Profanations, blasphemies, heresies, idolatries, murders, cruelties, impurities, adulteries, lascivious thoughts, rank passions, and foul language, deceits, calumnies, avarice, and Satanic pride, like

clammy, twisting, enfolding serpents, and foul toads, surround Him, creep on Him, slime Him, own Him; wind their way into His heart, glide and hop into the sanctuary of His soul, draw their track across His immaculate imagination, plunge their fetid carcasses into the clear well of His chaste mind. The filthy tongue of Nero seems to be in His mouth, the lascivious glances and winks of Herodias and Salome seem to be in His eyes, the avarice of Dives seems to be in His fingers, the dripping sword of Attila seems to be in His hand, the blasphemies of Voltaire seem to fly upward from His lips, the gorging appetite of Heliogobalus seems to be in His palate, the sacrilegious sophisms of Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches, and the whole tribe of heretics seem to be in His mind. St. Paul says: "He *became sin* for us." What else can these words mean? Christ did not commit sin; Christ was not interiorly tempted by sin; but He was identified with sin vicariously. And think of the chaste and gentle Son of Mary and of God in contact with such things! Even men, after passion passes, when they are restored to their sense of decency, are humiliated at the remembrance of their deeds. How must

He feel in the presence of sins, without the blind of passion to obscure their repulsiveness from Him! He who (mind you) regards them as His own by proxy! Feels their putridity soaking His hair, running down His face, defiling His lips, oozing from His body, dripping from Him and polluting the ground on which He kneels! And His Father, whom He loves with an infinite tenderness, looks down with horror on Him in His assumed wickedness; in His leprous decay; in the loathsome disease which He has caught as it were while nursing His infected brethren in the lazar house of the world! And this look pierces Him, breaks His heart, and forces the agonizing cry: "Father, if it be possible, let this hour pass from Me!"

But the hour does not pass. It only varies the appalling scene. For now, after the vileness of sin has saturated His soul with loathing, the ingratitude of sin piles a dead weight on His heart. "If my enemy had done this to me," He says, "I could forget; but thou, my friend, who hast sat with me at meat!" He came down from Heaven to woo Jerusalem as a bride; but she turns her back upon Him and on the morrow will

have Him cast beyond the city gates and crucified between two thieves. For thousands of years His coming has been hailed. He comes joyously to love and to be loved; and men frown at Him, curse and kill Him. Judas darkens before Him, fingering the purse, kissing Him, and hanging himself on the cursed tree; Peter swears thrice that he never knew this ridiculous Convict; the other disciples take to flight; the Pharisees hate Him; the brutal soldiers jeer at Him; and some of the very populace (may we not believe?) whom for three years He has been loving, curing, feeding, consoling and teaching, spurn Him. Dumb lips which He has loosed cry "Crucify"; palsied hands which He has restored strike His thorn-crowned head with a reed; blind eyes which He has opened glut themselves on His wounds; lame feet which He has made whole kick at Him on the dolorous way to Calvary. Tell me, Brethren, did not this vision of the cruel thanklessness of His dear children help to draw from His most sensitive heart that cry of cries; "Father, if it be possible, let this hour pass from Me!"

And the fruitlessness of His work in the souls of multitudes broke His heart. In the

shadows of the olive trees He sees Hell and myriads of souls, about to be purchased by His blood, going there. Their eternal loss crushes Him. The victorious grin of Satan confronting Him, humbles Him. For the great enemy leers at Him from behind a tree, taunts Him in the stillness of the night, ridicules Him, mocks Him with diabolical sarcasms about the failure of His enterprise;—and the trees and stars tremble at the blasphemies!—"You," he whispers in mockery, "You die for them, You love them; You are beautiful, sweet and pure; yet they will hate You, despise You, spurn You. I have done nothing for them, I hate them, I would destroy them; I am malignant, ugly, bitter and cruel; yet they will adore me and serve me. Oh, Christ, you meek Fool! A great Savior of the world! A great Leader of men! Shame on You for Your failure! Shame on Your empty Kingship. *I* am the King of men! *I* am the great success! *I* have magnetized mankind! Men are mine, and You shall not get them! My Kingdom will conquer Yours." Saying this, he vanishes; bloody sweat is all over the body of Christ, and He falls upon His face, anguished with the vision of anticipated, partial defeat.

Again, He sees the heaped-up sufferings and ignominy of the morrow. Annas and Caiphas, Pilate and Herod, are before Him; the scourging, crowning with thorns, and the *Ecce Homo* are more terrible to Him in imagination than they will be in reality. The carrying of the Cross, the three falls, the climbing of the hill, the disrobing, the piercing of the nails, the erection of the Cross, the three hours' pain, the thirst, the dereliction, and the death of Good Friday are gone through in vision on Holy Thursday night with the keenest intuition of prevision. He sees it all, feels it all, shrinks from it, and His whole soul cries: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!"

One more weight of sorrow presses Him to the ground:—sympathetic sorrow for the sufferings of His faithful followers. He foresees what they will have to endure for Him. Men will consider it a service done to God to rid the world of them. Mary, His mother, will stand at the foot of the Cross, His Apostles will be driven from the synagogues, brought before judges, imprisoned, scourged, martyred for His sake. Millions of Christians will be driven from the light of day to the catacombs for refuge; will be

burned alive, decapitated, shot with arrows, drowned, racked to death for His name's sake. Holy men and women without number, either living in religious life or in the world, will have to deny their flesh in a thousand ways in order that they may be faithful to Him. The members of His Church in modern days will be misunderstood, despised, hated, discriminated against; and all for Him! He sees that He has been set up in the world as a sign to be contradicted, and that His followers must share in His fate of being persecuted by the world. And as He loves them with a mother's love, so, like a mother, he forgets His own sorrows to weep by anticipation over theirs. Christ, our Lord, would like to lead us to Heaven along a rosy path. But He cannot, for if we went that way, we should go astray. Our path must be hard. But do not imagine that Christ takes pleasure in being severe to us. He grieves at being obliged to give us a cross. He is the Man of Sorrows. He knows by experience what sorrow is. He is aware how keenly we feel it; and on Holy Thursday He sweats blood of sympathy for men and women crushed in the valley of tears.

And now, Brethren, let me ask you: Do

you understand what the agony in the garden means? Do you see the horror of it, the pathos of it, the beauty of it? And do you realize what ought to be your attitude toward it? What feelings you ought to entertain for your Saviour? What resolutions you ought to take?

First, you must abhor sin; and abhor yourself if you have sinned. You cannot afford to come here and meditate upon the agony of Christ, and then go back to your homes and be as you were before. That would be playing at religion; that would be a mockery, an almost unbelievable callousness toward a most inspiring truth. Do not satisfy yourself with the thought that you sympathize with Christ. The first thing to do is to repudiate sin. If you are sincere, you will have done with sin. Christ does not want your sympathy if you are not willing to amend. You may not touch Him compassionately with soiled hands. You may not speak to Him except with a broken voice. You may not look at His agony except through tears. Strike your breast, therefore, and bowing your head in penitence allow your heart to be touched to-night with the grace of contrition. He will forgive. He is

enduring all this that you may be touched and converted to Him. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow." Pity Christ, love Christ, return to Christ, who in the garden carries the sins of the world; and you will save Him from bearing one portion of that burden, you will wipe away one tear from His eye, you will suppress one lament from His lips, you will extract one drop of bitterness from the chalice which is being pressed to His lips among the olive trees the night before His death.

Then, assure Him that you will not be among the lost, but will defeat the devil's designs. Tell Him that millions upon millions in the ages to come will love Him with their whole hearts' devotion; that martyrs, confessors and virgins will follow Him, that His Church will convert and save multitudes; and that in the next world choirs of angels and the blessed army of saints will proclaim forever that His death has not been in vain; that He is indeed a conquering King!

Tell him also that you will not mind the crosses which God sends, but will be gallant for His sake, enduring sorrow with a smile

and pain with patience in order that you may be like Him in His passion and death.

And tell Him that you will sympathize with anguished men and women around you in the world to-day, who take His place. You could not sympathize with Him twenty centuries ago; for you did not live then. You cannot fully sympathize with Him as He is now; for now He is happy. But you can sympathize with His brethren. And the best evidence of the genuineness of your compassion for Him will be your compassion for them. The world is full of Christs to-night in the garden of olives. You know that as well as I. Go, seek them out, and pour balm into their breaking hearts. Do not wait until they come to you. Many of them will never come. Do not sleep in the comfort and luxury of forgetfulness and indifference, like the disciples on Holy Thursday night, while sisters and brothers of Christ are sweating blood and draining the chalice of sorrow to the dregs. True religion consists in fraternal charity. Brotherly love is the fulfillment of the law. Christ will have none of your sympathy if you pass by your suffering brethren.

Moreover, you have sins about which

sometimes you feel uneasy. The best means of assuring yourself of forgiveness is to be found in sympathetically helping those who need your help. For if you dry their tears, you dry Christ's tears; if you hold them up, you hold Christ up; if you comfort them, you comfort Him. And on the last day He will say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father; for when I was in sorrow, you comforted me; when you did this to the least of My servants, you did it unto Me!"

And you, afflicted mothers, fathers, children, brothers, sisters, wives, and lovers, try to realize that Christ, the Man of Sorrows, is leaning over you to-night, touching you, encircling you with His arms, feeling with you, and weeping with you in your distress. Realize that it was the sight of you that made Him cry in sympathetic agony, that the compassion of His Sacred Heart is and ought to be the most soothing ointment for your wounded hearts. Oh, the olives of the garden were bitter to Him; but they have been pressed into a healing unction, an easing balm for your wounds! By His sorrow our sorrows are allayed. If you try to bear grief alone, you will fail, become embittered, pessimistic, cynical, hard; rebellious to God,

bitter to men, dejected with yourself. But if you take home the thought that He is now, and was on Holy Thursday night, keenly alive to your woes, you will be consoled, look up again, take courage from the thought that some one (and such a One!) is with you; you will love Him for forgetting His own woes to weep for you; you will feel ashamed of not forgetting your woes to weep with Him; you will go in spirit among the olive-trees, kneel down at His side and with Him exclaim: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; yet not my will but thine be done!"

There is one more lesson we must not forget—the lesson of strengthening prayer. The Evangelist says that, being in an agony, Jesus prayed the longer, that three times He returned to pray, that twice He warned His Apostles: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak!" An angel came and strengthened Him and He rose up mightily, and faced His fate. If Christ had not prayed (an absurd supposition, of course), would He have had the strength to rise superior to His sorrow and die for us? In sorrow we are least inclined to pray—

then when we need prayer most. If we do not pray, we shall go down to ruin; if we do pray, we shall conquer. Fix your eyes, therefore, to-night upon the closing garden scene, and learn! Notice the strength, self-possession, calm assurance, dignity, and even majesty of Christ. Can this be the same Person who a short time ago was writhing in extremity of distress? It is. And prayer has made the change. He rises from His place, wipes the blood, perspiration, and dust from His face, arranges His garment, leans for a moment for strength against a tree, stands erect, breathes freely in the consciousness of His new might, even smiles that the worst is passed, and then walks forth. Calmly He tells the disciples that His hour has come. The shouts of ruffians sound near by; their swinging lanterns show between the trees; the Apostles wonder and fear; He smiles; they slept anticipating nothing; He prayed, anticipating everything. Judas kisses Him. Jesus says with calm dignity and love: "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" Masterfully, He addresses the mob: "Why do you come out for Me with swords and clubs? When I taught daily among you in the Temple, you laid not hands on me:

But this is your hour and the hour of darkness." Peter in hysterical unpreparedness cuts off the ear of one of the mob. Christ quietly replaces the ear. "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all that take the sword, shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels?" When he says to them: "Whom seek ye?" they all fall prostrate under His eye and word; and when by His power they are allowed to rise, He adds: "If you seek me, let these go their way." His disciples flee. The mob seizes Him, ties Him, and drags Him down the slope of the hill. But withal He goes like a King. And all that day a sublime self-possession encompasses Him. He maintains a superb dignity in disgrace. He stands before Annas and Caiphas to be accused; but *He* accuses *them.* He is spat upon, struck, scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified ignominiously; without being ignominious. Before His contemptuous judges He is not contemptible. Between two thieves He is not a felon. And a poor man, buried in a tomb that is not His own, He lies like an emperor in state. Gaze at Him, marching on with the sublime poise and

assurance which His prayer has given Him, —with a sublime poise and assurance which do not detract from, but rather add to, the pathos of it all—and follow Him with the strength of prayer, to do, to suffer, to smile, and not to yield.

V

THE RED-CROSS KNIGHT

And it was the preparation of the passover and about the sixth hour; and [Pilate] said to the Jews: behold your King! But they cried out: Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate said unto them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief-priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar. Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it on the cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. . . . Then the chief-priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not, the King of the Jews; but that he said: I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Him, took his garments (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part), and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith: "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they have cast lots." Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And the people stood, beholding. And the priests also

with them derided Him, saying: He saved others, let him save Himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And one of the malefactors who were hanged blasphemed, saying: If Thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked Him, saying: Dost thou no fear God, seeing that thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto Him: "Amen I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother.—When therefore, Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing whom he loved, He said to his mother: "Woman, behold thy son." After that he said to the disciple: "Behold thy mother." And from that hour, the disciple took her unto his own.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: "Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And some that stood there and had heard, said: "This man calleth Elias."

Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: "I thirst." Now there was set a vessel there full of vinegar; and they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth. Jesus therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said: "It is finished." And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: "Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit." And saying this, he gave up the ghost."

This is the story of Christ's Passion and Death, according to the Gospels, brief but pregnant with significance. The saints have looked on it as a gold mine of sanctity.

Indeed, it offers material for meditation for a life-time. Hence we cannot hope in one short hour to study it in detail, but must be satisfied with summing its meaning up in brief.

If, therefore, I may epitomize the Tragedy of tragedies without risk of spoiling it, I would say that Christ on the Cross presents Himself to us in a fivefold light: As a picture of eloquence, capable of softening the hardest heart; as a picture of the mercy of God, demanding our gratitude and love; as a picture of pathos, eliciting our sympathy; as a picture of physical suffering, moving us to imitation; as a picture of the cruelty of sin, to which should correspond our hatred of sin.

I stand on Calvary and Christ, our Lord, is in the pulpit of the Cross, about to give a sermon, the most touching and sublime that has ever been given in the history of the world, or will be, until the end of time.

Behold Him crowned like a prince, clad in a gorgeous garment of white and red, the white and red of His own flesh and blood; His arms eloquently outstretched, and His head bent forward in passionate appeal; speaking to us not so much with vocal lips,

but every wound is a mouth of crimson eloquence and every mouth has a tongue, and every tongue speaks a word, and that one word uttered over and over again through His three hours' sermon on the Cross is: "I love thee, wilt thou love Me? I die for thee, will thou not live for Me?"

And now I ask you: Are your hearts ready for the words of Christ? Or, is it possible that some of you have come here to-night as you might go to a theatre, simply to see and hear, to play at religion and to toy with the things of eternity; to break the monotony of a worldly life with a dash of piety, or to enjoy the luxury of a sad emotion at the expense of a dying God? Is it possible that some of you have come here not expecting that the Crucified Saviour will call upon you to crucify yourself; here sitting down at the pulpit Cross of Christ, not expecting that He will direct the full force of His eloquence against you, searching your hearts to the very core, and crying out to you again and again to rise from worldliness and sin?

Brethren, if there be any lack of piety among you, if there be any of the spirit of frivolity or curiosity, I call on you in the name of God and for the love of Jesus

Christ to banish it from your hearts to-night. Fall down upon your knees, bow your heads, hide your faces in your hands, and may the tears of penitential grief trickle down between your fingers. Pray to Christ, sing to Christ, listen to the songs that are sung to Christ, listen to the words that I shall speak of Christ, but especially gaze upon your pierced Christ. For, believe me, He has called you here to-night to move you, to touch you, to arouse you. Believe me, this hour is a retreat for you, and if you go forth from this holy place no better than you came, you go forth worse; for you go with a responsibility upon your souls of graces that have been received but not employed. For you stand on Calvary and Christ is in the pulpit of the cross about to give you all a sermon, the most touching and sublime that has ever been in the history of the world or will be, until the end of time.

Mary, the Mother Jesus, heard that sermon and was touched, for she went down from Calvary with a broken heart. Mary Magdalen heard that sermon and was touched, for she knelt at the Cross of Christ, bathed His feet with her tears, and anointed them, not as she had done in the house of

Simon the Leper, with the precious contents of her alabaster box, but with the unction of her love. The centurion heard that sermon and was touched; for bowing his head and striking his breast, he exclaimed: "Truly this was the Son of God!"

God grant that you may return to your homes to-night with Mary's sword of sympathetic love in your hearts for Christ. God grant that you may kneel here in spirit all the days of your life, bathing His feet with the tears of penitential grief and anointing them with the ointment of your heart's best love. God grant that, like the centurion, you may pass through the streets to-night, with your head bowed down and your hands upon your breast, saying to yourself as you go along: "Truly, truly this Crucified life of the Crucified Christ is the only life for a Christian woman and a Christian man!"

The Cross is a picture of the mercy of God, which ought to evoke our love and gratitude. As I stand on Calvary, the thought comes into my mind with overpowering force, that if God had not had mercy, there could be no prospect for me beyond the grave, but death eternal. If mercy had not tempered justice, none of us

should see salvation. But mercy tempered justice; and it dropped down like a gentle dew and a golden seed upon the place beneath. Then there sprang forth a tree with fruit:—The tree was the Cross and the fruit was Christ. In the Paradise of old there was the Tree of Life, which brought forth death; and here on Calvary is this tree of death which brings forth life. And as Mother Eve did pluck the fruit of life and, in eating it, ate death, so we may pluck this fruit of death and, in eating it, eat life. Oh, let us feast upon this fruit of love, so golden, so crimson, so sweet; and let us sit down in the luxuriant shade of this mercy-tree, full-foliaged, as it is, with the grace of God, so as to escape the blinding sheen and consuming heat of the sun of God's just wrath!

We may often have wondered how the saints could keep their austere watch, in perennial silence and loneliness, upon the bleak rock of Calvary, far from the glowing beauty and caressing luxury of Jerusalem, the city of the world, at the foot of the mount. It was because they remembered that by His cross they had been saved! The saints were not abnormal men and women, colorless and chill, with a freakish and unnatural

partiality for cheerlessness. On the contrary, they were acutely sensitive to the seductiveness of pleasure, and keen for every allurement which intrigues the heart. Nevertheless, they repudiated delight and embraced pain, yes, and found their delight in pain, because they remembered that by His Cross they had been saved! They knelt on that barren eminence, they gazed at their Saviour on the Cross, then looked over their shoulder, down at the fires of hell; they realized that by this tragedy they had been delivered from that fate: and so all the days of their life, the constant prayer in their mind and on their lips has been: "We adore Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, and we bless Thy holy name, because by Thy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world!"

The case could have been otherwise. God could have left us to our eternal fate. Had He done so, the accumulated merits of all the saints would have been in vain. Men like St. Lawrence, women like St. Cecilia and Agnes, would have been lost despite their heroism and sweet purity. Black despair would have enveloped the earth and permeated all history. If even the possibility of going to hell is enough to fill the soul with

fear, what would be the ebon desolation of our feelings, if going to hell were a certainty for us? But hell is not a certainty for us, because by His Cross we have been saved!

Yet multitudes of men act as if they had not been saved, as if they owed Him nothing. Christ on the Cross is in fact the central figure of the world to whom the Old Testament looked forward, to whom all men of the New Testament ought to look back. As the hero is to the play, as the sun is to the heavens, as a jewel is to the ring, as the center of a circle is to the circumference, so Christ is to all things in the world. Yet numbers of men engross themselves in everything but Him, forget Him, ignore Him, nay, even deny and defame Him,—altogether oblivious of the glorious fact that by His Cross the world was saved.

But the Church does not forget; rather she looks back to Him always with affectionate gratitude.

While abroad last year I saw gorgeous cathedrals and realized with a glad heart that they are monuments to Him. They were not built by the Church merely for the love of art or for the sake of captivating the esthetic imaginations of men. On the contrary,

like Magdalen, who poured the precious ointment from her alabaster box upon Christ's feet, the Church, through the instrumentality of her Michael Angelos and Raphaels and Mozarts has lavished her best upon Him in marbles, bronzes, music, and canvasses. Almost every church is in the form of a cross, in resplendent windows are pictures of Him, and mosaics embody the mysteries of His life and death. Best of all, the daily Sacrifice of the Mass is offered on altars, in accordance with His pathetic request of the Last Supper: "Do this in commemoration of me!" Especially in Lent and Holy Week, in the midst of sackcloth and ashes, tears and penitential psalms, silenced bells, and dimmed lights, dismantled altars and veiled statues, prophetic lamentations over the slain Saviour, sung in the plain chant of mourning, and the Evangelists' simple, sublime, and pathetic story of His Passion and death; with the exquisite tenderness of a spouse she remembers, and tells her children to remember, that by His Cross He has saved the world.

In London men place wreaths of flowers at the monument of the Unknown Soldier, and raise their hats with grateful reverence as

they pass by. In France a flame burns night and day at his grave under the Triumphal Arch of Napoleon, and people standing there must be hatless and speechless. How much more becoming is it not for passers-by to salute the Church and keep a perennial taper burning before the tabernacle where lies the Soldier of Calvary, by whose Cross the world was saved!

O Jesus, because Thou hast wept, I now may smile; because Thou were crowned with thorns, I now may hope for a heavenly aureola; because Thou didst taste the vinegar, I now may quaff the nectar of spiritual delights; because Thou wast nailed to the cross, I now may hope to occupy a throne!

Therefore, I love Thee, I adore Thee, I thank Thee; and from the depths of my heart exclaim: "May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and may my hand wither upon my arm, if ever I forget Thee, oh Christ, oh Cross, oh Calvary!"

In the third place Christ is a picture of pathos eliciting our sympathy.

In the 53rd chapter of the Prophet Isaias we read: "Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? And he shall grow up as a tender

plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: There is no beauty in him, no comeliness: And we have seen him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of him:

"Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmities: and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not.

"Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.

"But he was wounded for our iniquities. He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we were healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray, everyone hath turned aside into his own way; And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

But as if the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross were not enough to touch our hearts, Almighty God has placed his sorrowful mother as a complementary attractiveness at the foot of it. And as a matter of fact, many a man uninfluenced by the pathos of Christ

has been softened by hers, and through a tenderness for her has been led to conceive a love for Him.

And so, recall the words of Holy Writ: "There was standing at the cross of Christ, His mother."

Who can describe the pathos of Mary at the foot of the Cross? She stands there in her blue mantle; her face is white, her eyes are filled with tears, and her heart is broken. "For Christ above in anguish hangs,—And she, beneath, beholds the pangs—Of her dying glorious Son." She looks at His face and at His breast, she looks at His limbs and at His feet; and her face is like the dead, and her eyes are wells of bitterness, and her heart is riven with woe.

"Oh how sad and sore distressed,
Was that Mother highly blessed.
Through her heart His passion sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Now at length the sword has passed.
Is there one who would not weep,
Whelmed in miseries so deep
Christ's dear Mother to behold?
Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold."

Our Lord could not refrain from partaking in her pain; and hence He wished in sympathy to give her the best thing He had. He would have liked to give Her Heaven, but could not then. He would have liked to give her Himself; but could not, because He was held by the cruel arms of the Cross. So He gave her the next best thing He had on earth—His disciple of love and purity. And in St. John He gave her His Church, and in the Church, He gave her us to be her comforting children till the end of time. And this was a noble gift. For though it sinks into insignificance by the side of Christ whom she was losing, yet John was the disciple of purity and love; and the Church was to be a true daughter to Mary. She would wreathe flowers around her brow, and raise her to a pedestal, and build altars and churches to her, and gather her children around Mary's feet, and make them sing hymns to her, and call her Mother, and Queen of Virgins, and Mother of Sorrows, and finally we, unworthy though we be, love her, as we show by coming here to-night, to console her at the foot of the Cross.

Let us imitate this love of Jesus for His Mother and renew the gift which He made

of us to her. And in this, we have the example of St. John. For, from the time that Jesus gave Mary to him, he took her to his own. That night they lowered the body of Jesus from the cross and placed it in the sepulchre. And now the moon is high in the heavens, shedding its rays like a veil on the white city, the three black crosses yonder, and the sepulchre. The holy women with many a lingering longing look behind them, wend their way down from the hill;—and with them is Mary on the arm of John! Oh, how his breast must have swelled with pride, even in the midst of his sorrow, to think that he was leading away as comforter, the very Queen of Heaven! What man or woman amongst us would not give up all the vanities of the world to become the consoler of the Mother of Sorrows!

But now let me remember that I may console her; for I too am a child of hers. I too, like John, may stand with Mary on Calvary, or as she sits at the foot of the Cross with the dead Christ in her arms, I may approach her and kneeling down at her lap and looking up into her face, may say to her: "Mother, wilt thou not smile again, wilt thou weep forever, and will thy heart be

never mended more?" And when she says to me in accents pathetic: "How can I smile on Calvary, and how can I cease from weeping here, and how can my heart rejoice at the foot of the Cross?" Then I can and will say to her: "Then, Mother, if thou wilt not smile with me, I'll weep with thee; and I'll stay with thee on Calvary, far from the palaces of kings, far from the lights and noise of worldliness—with thee on Calvary—and I will dry thy tears and soothe thee, Mother, truly. But oh, take away this heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh."

"Oh thou Mother, font of love
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord,
Make me feel what thou hast felt
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ, my Lord."

But let me remember this, that if I wish to share with St. John his privilege of consoler, I must share with him his virtue. He could stand at Mary's side on Calvary because his soul was unflecked, and could offer her his supporting hand, because that hand was virgin to the Virgin Queen. Hence let me keep in mind that if I wish to kneel at

her knees, and hide my face in her lap, and feel her regal arms around my shoulders and her mother's breath upon my neck, I too, like John, must be immaculate.

In the fourth place the Cross is a picture of physical pain, which we ought to imitate by suffering with patience and fortitude.

The world was a cruel spouse to Christ. He came down from Heaven to woo her, and she turned her back upon Him, cast Him beyond the city's gates, and crucified Him between two thieves. His whole life had been one of suffering. He Himself had said: "The foxes have their holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay his head." Full many a time after preaching all day long, he had been obliged to retire to the hill-tops to take His rest. Full many a time and oft the dews of night were on His head, His only couch was the grass, the ceiling of His room was the sky above Him, and His candles to light Him to rest were the stars of heaven. Full many a time He had been roused in the morning by the birds, His lavatory had been the running brook, His drink had been a drop of water, and His only food had been given Him by bush, vine, and tree.

After this life of poverty and suffering, He died in anguish on the Cross. For Scripture tells us that His brow was pierced with thorns, His eyes were filled with blood, perspiration and tears, His nostrils were distended with pain, His lips were parched, and His tongue was blackened with thirst, His shoulders were cut with whips. His hands and feet were dug with nails, and His side was opened with a lance.

Truly, the world had been a cruel spouse to Christ. Hence it was that He turned from her with a sigh of relief and, leaning His head upon His father's breast, exclaimed: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"[2]

Let us approach the cross and, looking up into the face of the dead Christ, say to Him: "O Jesus, how glad I am that Thou art dead! How glad, that thou wilt suffer now no more! Thy brow will never more be pierced with thorns; Thy hands will never more be torn with nails; Thy heart will never more be broken! No mob will curse Thee, Lord; no judge condemn; no wintry wind will cut Thee on the open hill; no eastern sun will burn Thee more; no poverty will

stint. For Thou art on the threshold of Thy exceeding joy!

It was the sight of Christ in pain on Calvary which caught and held the saints. For they felt that they could not in common decency recline on a couch of roses while He lay on the hard bed of the cross. So they gave up every pleasure for Him.

Let us imitate the saints. And in doing so we shall be strengthened by the thought that our sufferings are nothing in comparison with His.

As I look out upon you to-night, I see no crown of thorns upon your brow, no tears and blood in your eyes, no thirst at your lips, I hear no oaths at your ears, I see no nails in your hands and feet. But your brow is wreathed with flowers, your eyes are radiant with joy, your nostrils are flattered with fragrant scents, your palate is soothed with delicate viands, your hands are set with jewels instead of nails, your feet are propped upon silken cushions instead of resting upon a nail-pierced block. And there you are perhaps set in a background of luxury, with all the pomp and circumstance of wealth around you, and the trappings of

social life to grace you; and still you say you are overwhelmed with suffering. Oh, shame on you, Christian souls, thus to make lament at the Cross of Christ! Put aside this narrowness and enlarge your hearts, come hither to the Cross, kneel down and, looking up into your Saviour's face, say: "O Lord, since Thou hast endured so much for me, I shall try to bear the hardships of my life for Thee."

Finally, Christ on the Cross is a picture of the enormity of sin, to which should correspond our hatred of sin.

God showed us the awfulness of sin powerfully by punishing the angels, more powerfully by driving our first parents from the garden of Eden, but most powerfully by his Passion and death. Sin must be a horrid thing to have required such atonement; sin must be the quintessence of meanness to have made those wounds in the hands and feet, and to have filled those eyes with tears. And now in the light of the Passion I must regard myself as a leper of moral degradation if I have sinned. Surely this is no exaggeration, for my sins have drawn upon Christ the extremity of suffering and contempt.

But you may say to me: "It is so hard to

appreciate the enormity of sin!" I say so too. For I look out upon the world, and it seems to me so fair. I see palatial homes and gorgeous rooms and comfortable ease; and all this seems so fair, so sweet, so innocent. I see the glitter of the theatre, the color of imagination, the warmth of emotion which pervades life in the world, and all these seem so sweet, so fair, so innocent. And Sin presents herself to me in an attractive human form. I gaze upon her lily hands, her beaming eyes, her ruby lips, her magnetic character, her refinement of manner, her delicacy of touch, her exquisite sense of the proprieties of life, her quickness of wit, her keenness of mind; and all this seems so sweet, so fair, so innocent. Then she says to me: Behold my hands, and see my face, and look into my eyes, and see that I am not foul, but passing fair. And fool that I am, I am on my knees with my eyes raised in ready adoration to her eyes, when there comes a clarion call from the Cross of Christ, and He says to me: Behold My hands not lily white, behold My eyes not filled with smiles, behold My lips not ruby red, behold My body all torn and gashed; and this has been not to Me but Sin; by Sin

the lily-fingered, by Sin with dove-like eyes and childlike smile;—*Sin* has murdered Me, Thy God!

Yes, Sin has murdered God. For the great Atoner, raising His eyes to Heaven, exclaimed: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and bowing His head, gave up the ghost.

And the sun was darkened, the earth quaked, the rocks were split, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom, and many of the dead arose and were seen wandering in the streets of Jerusalem. And the centurion, seeing these wonders, struck his breast and said: "Truly, this was the Son of God!" And the people went back to the city through the darkness, striking their breasts.

But His Mother, the holy women, and John remained there, watching the White Figure on the black Cross.

Slowly the darkness lifts and the pale sun sheds a few timid faltering rays on the scene;—*the first beams which fall upon a world redeemed.* Then come Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They loosen His body from the Cross, and place it in the lap of His Mother. She looks at the wan figure;

she remembers the rosy smiling babe in her arms at Bethlehem, and the sixth sword of anguish tears through her soul. They take Him from her, wash Him, anoint Him. With torch light they carry Him to the tomb. They lay Him in His place, the great stone is rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre: And the seventh sword of parting is driven home. Then they lead her down from the hill of tragedy to her empty house.

It is now the middle of the night, and moonlight sleeps on Calvary. The paschal moon, serene and heartless, smiles down on this scene of desolation and tragedy.

Yonder are the two Roman soldiers sitting at the sepulchre, nodding, half asleep, their helmets glistening to the moon; and within, the pallid Christ, wrapped in sere cloth and fragrant with aromatical spices, sleeps, awaiting the cock crow of Easter morn. And Jerusalem the deicide rests well!

But the priests, what of them? Oh, they are weary with their day's work well done, and sleep. But in their sleep they dream; and their terror-stricken dream is that He has risen from the dead. And how they will smile to themselves, rubbing their hands with glee, at the first light of morning to

realize that it was only a dream! But know ye priests He *will* rise from the dead and smite you with His wrath.

Peter cannot sleep. Instead, he walks the streets of Jerusalem until break of day, distracted, with a broken heart. Thrice he had promised to die with Him, but three times had he denied Him; such a Master, such a Friend! And now it is too late to make amends,—too late!

Yonder the white palace of Pontius Pilate slumbers in the white moonlight. But within it the Roman Governor cannot sleep. For ever and anon through the night there stands before him that White Figure with the words, "I am a king," and those other haunting words: He says, He is the Son of God.—And until the end of life sweet sleep, unbroken by nightmares, will not watch at his couch.

The soldiers who nailed Him to the cross do not sleep, but keep high festivity in low dives, carousing, dancing, rubbing elbows with lewd women and flaunting from their shoulders prize portions of the raiment of the Sinless One.

The friends of Jesus also watched. I see Veronia in her cottage, like a statue motion-

less on her knees, Her swimming eyes fixed on the kerchief with its crimson image of His Face.

And in the house of mourning *per excellence,* Magadelen and John watch with the woman of sorrows. Magdalen sobs: "Oh, the cruelty of them! How could they have treated Him so?" John sits silent, full of solicitude for his new mother, but powerless to console her. And Mary is at the breaking point, in the blackest chasm of her life, her heart a well of bitterness.

They watch; they cannot sleep! And sleep will not close those dear eyes nor peace sooth those broken hearts *until the golden news is flashed upon the world that He is risen from the dead!*

VI

BANNERS AND TRUMPETS

About four months ago in Jerusalem, I knelt at the Tomb of Christ. A vase of flowers adorned it the day I paid my visit there. I asked the Greek priest for some of them, and he gave me two blooms, one gold and one violet; and across 4,000 miles of land and sea I have carried them to show them to my friends of this church.

The Holy Sepulchre is enclosed in a sort of marble ark. Above it a cluster of lamps burn night and day to symbolize the *risen Light of the World.* A few yards from the Sepulchre is the Rock of Calvary, surmounted by a wooden Cross with a figure of the Christ. At the foot of the Cross a split in the stone locates the fissure made by the earthquake at Christ's death. At the right of the Cross a picture of Our Lady is incrusted with jewels offered through the centuries by pilgrims from every quarter of the

world. Down from the Cross there is a marble slab, where the Body of Christ was anointed for burial; and near it an enclosed space, where Mary Magdalen saw the Risen Saviour in the semblance of a gardener.

This sacred ground is enshrined in a stone basilica about 100 years old, the last of a series which has stood there, back through the centuries to the time of Constantine.

With this spray of flowers from the Tomb of Christ I brought also a bouquet of memories. For instance: How in the second century Hadrian, the pagan Emperor of Rome, built a temple of Venus on the Rock of Calvary to insult the Christians and dishonor Christ. How, when Constantine won his victory over Maxentius, his Mother, St. Helena, discovered the Holy Cross underground at the foot of Calvary, and tearing down the pagan fane, erected the first basilica of the Crucified. How, about the ninth century, the Greeks gave up their allegiance to the See of Peter and kept the Holy Places in their hands. How afterwards the Turks came and took them from the Greeks. How crusades were waged to recover the Sepulchre of Christ from the Infidel. How Godfrey of Bouillon and Tancred of the first crusade

captured Jerusalem and entered the city in sackcloth with crosses on their backs. How after a tenure of eighty years by Latins of the West, the city was retaken by the Turks. How Richard, the Lion-hearted King of England, fought bravely but in vain against Saladin. How the eighth crusade was lead by St. Louis, King of France, the knight without fear and without reproach. How a sort of ninth and peaceful crusade was inaugurated and carried to a successful issue by the sons of St. Francis, who built churches everywhere in Palestine and saved the Holy Land for us of the West, insofar as it has been saved. How, finally, the English under Allynby in the late war took Palestine; and the first person in Christendom, to whom Allynby, though an Englishman and a Protestant, sent the report of his success, was the Bishop of Rome, in recognition of all the efforts which his predecessors had made heroically but unsuccessfully to do what the English general had just succeeded in accomplishing.

But of course my greatest memory of the Holy Sepulchre is that of Christ Risen from that Tomb upon the first Easter morn.

The story is brief, but glorious: "He has risen again as He said; Alleluia."

These words express a fact and a feeling. The fact is the Resurrection of Christ and the feeling is that of joy. Let us fix our eyes upon Christ risen from the dead and rejoice. For Christ risen from the dead presents Himself to us in a threefold light: As a picture of beauty, as a picture of goodness, and as a picture of joyousness, capable of arousing in our hearts sentiments of tender love.

And first Christ on Easter morn is a picture of beauty. For He is beautiful in His Humanity, beautiful in His Divinity, and beautiful in His wounds.

When Christ walked the earth in the days of His mortality, He had the power of magnetizing the hearts of men, casting over them a charm which held them spellbound in His hands. What that charm was precisely, we do not know. Whether it was the majesty of His countenance, or the dignity of His bearing, or the look in His eyes, or the sweetness of His words, or the affability of His manner, or the tenderness of His Sacred Heart, we do not know. But whatever it was, He

kept it after death. One would imagine that Christ would have been glad to forget the purely human qualities of His mortality, as being unworthy of the higher life of the spirit upon which He was entering; just as a shepherd, on being elevated to a throne, amidst the gorgeous appointments of a royal court, would wish to relegate to oblivion the plebeian ways of his shepherd life. But the case was quite otherwise. When the Son of God became man, He wedded Himself to our humanity and would never allow Himself to be divorced from it. He would not permit one jot or tittle of His naturalness to be withdrawn. Indeed Christ was more human, kinder and sweeter after His Resurrection than before it, and His natural characteristics stand out more emphatically by contrast in their own warm coloring against the shining background of Easter glory.

But He was also beautiful in His Divinity. For all eternity the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity had dwelt in light inaccessible. When He became a man He obscured the effulgence of His Godhead beneath the weeds of our humanity. Only once in life, on Mount Thabor, did the light shine through.

But on Easter morn all was changed. For His head was circled with a nimbus, His face was like the sun, His five wounds shot forth flashes of crimson, His Divinity shone through His flesh like a light through a translucent vase, and His whole body was bathed in a golden mist.

He was beautiful in His wounds. One would imagine that Christ would have preferred to remove those marks of his infamy. But again the case was quite otherwise. For He kept them as badges of victory, as recesses for us in time of distress, and as lips of supplication at His Father's throne.

When a soldier returns from the wars, he does not pride himself on a pair of epaulets or a piece of gold braid on his sleeve but on the badges that he wears in his flesh; red wounds which had sheathed the foeman's sword. So when Christ went back to Heaven from the Battlefield of Calvary, He carried with Him the insignia of victory over sin, death, and hell.

What the cleft in the rock is to the storm driven dove, so are the wounds of Christ to men in distress. Indeed, who can express the peace and sense of security in a soul which has passed through the portals of His

wounds, especially the wound in His side, into the ruby mansion of His Sacred Heart!

Christ prayed for us frequently on earth, in the crib, on many a hilltop at night, and on the cross. But He supplicates more powerfully for us now at His Father's throne, not so much with the lips of His mouth, as with the lips of his wounds, all moist with the red eloquence of His blood. Let us fix our eyes upon this picture of beauty, beautiful in His Humanity, beautiful in His Divinity, beautiful in His wounds, —and rejoice!

In the second place Christ risen from the dead is a picture of goodness. For He showed His goodness by consoling His friends, by giving us a much needed proof of His Divinity, and by withdrawing the sting from death.

When Mary went down from Calvary on the first Good Friday night, she went with a broken heart. But on Easter morn all was changed. For her room was flooded with a heavenly light and out of the effulgence stepped her Son. He approached her, took her in His arms, embraced her, kissed her, changed the seven swords of her sorrow into seven keen-edged blades of ecstasy; and

made her realize that this one instantaneous embrace was ample return to her for all the anguish of her life.

Early in the morning on the first day of the week, before the sun was up, Mary Magdalen and the other Marys carried sweet spices to the tomb to anoint the Body of Christ. On the way they asked each other: "Who shall remove for us the stone from the sepulchre?" When they arrived, the stone was gone; for an angel had descended from on high. His face was like the sun and his garments like snow. And seeing him, they feared with a great fear. But he said: "Fear not ye. For ye seek Jesus of Nazareth; He is not here. He has risen again as he said; see the place where they laid Him. But go tell ye His apostles that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him." And the women, except Magdalen, hurried back to the city with the good news. On the way Jesus appeared to them and said: "Peace be to you!" They fell to the ground in fear and joy.

But Mary Magdalen remained weeping at the tomb; and as she wept she stooped down, and looking into the sepulchre, saw two figures in white, one at the head and one at the

feet where Jesus had lain. They said to her: "Woman why weepest thou?" She answered: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have placed Him." As she said this, she turned and saw Jesus standing by, but did not recognize that it was He. And He said: "Woman why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She, supposing He was the gardener, said to Him: "If they have removed Him, tell me where they have placed Him, that I may go and carry Him away." He said to her the one word: "Mary." She recognized Him by the tone of His voice and cried "Raboni"; and falling to the ground embraced His feet. But He said: "Hold me not for I have not yet ascended on high." Mary Magdalen thought that her Heaven had already begun upon earth. But He seemed to mean: No! I must visit and comfort my other friends. Later I shall mount on high, and you will follow me, to lie at my feet forever in a rapture of delight.

That Sunday night the Apostles were in an upper chamber behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Suddenly Jesus appeared to them with the words, "Peace be unto you!" But they were frightened, thinking

they had seen a ghost. He said to them: "Why do you fear, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and feet and see that it is I myself." And while they still feared and wondered in their joy, He said: "Have you here any meat?" They gave Him a piece of fish and a honeycomb, which He ate before them. Then He said again: "Peace be to you; as the Father hath sent me, I send you"; and breathing upon them, He said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

The same Sunday afternoon two men went down on the road to Emmaus on leaden feet with heavy hearts. They had been followers of the young Prophet Christ, thinking that He would restore the glory of Israel. Now He was three days dead; and completely disillusioned, with crushed hopes, they were going back to the monotonous round of their daily work. But a young man caught up with them on the way and asked them the cause of their grief. They said to Him: "Have you not heard of the young prophet who was to restore the glory of Israel, but who was crucified and is now

three days dead?" Then the young man, who was Jesus in disguise, explained to them how Christ was to enter into glory through the Cross. And their eyes were opened. For they said afterwards to each other: "Did not our hearts burn within us while He spoke to us on the road?" And when they came to a parting of the ways, Jesus pretended to go on. But they said: "Will you not stay with us, for it is now well on towards evening?" And He went in with them, and broke bread, and they recognized Him in the breaking of bread and fell in adoration at His feet. When they looked up, he was gone; but the fragrance of Heaven was in the room; and those two men who had come down heavy-footed towards Emmaus, rushed back towards Jerusalem on wingéd feet, threaded their way through the streets of the city, and broke into the upper chamber crying: "We have seen the Lord!"

Shortly afterwards the disciples fished all night on the sea of Tiberias in vain. In the gray light of morning a figure appeared on the shore, telling them to cast the net on the right of the ship. They did so and pulled it out full of fish. St. John cried: "It is the Lord!" St. Peter threw off his garment and

leaped into the sea. And when they all had come ashore, Jesus did the dearest thing of His life. For He, the Son of God, the Risen Lord, made those rough fishermen sit down to breakfast and circled round them, serving while they ate. Then He drew from Peter a three-fold protestation of love, which was to compensate for the three denials; and made him head of the Church. "Simon, son of John," He said to him. "Lovest thou Me?" Peter answered: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus said: "Feed my sheep." The second time He said: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Peter said the second time: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus said: "Feed my sheep." The third time He said: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?"[2] Peter said: "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus said: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

Forty days after the Resurrection He appeared to 500 people on the Mount of Olives and ascended into Heaven. And while the disciples stood there with upraised faces, an angel said to them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here looking up to Heaven! Behold this Jesus whom you see mounting,

will come again." Scripture adds they went back to Jerusalem rejoicing. One would imagine that they would have gone back grieving. But they went back rejoicing, because, though His departure meant sorrow to them, it meant triumph for Him. Then they knew that Jesus would remain with them in the holy Eucharist, in the Church, and in the Person of the Holy Ghost. Besides, there was the great world out there to be converted; they would do their work and then with sheaves in their arms would return like Him to their Father's house.

"Finally," said St. Paul, "he appeared to me, last of all, as to one born out of time."

Yes, Jesus showed His goodness by consoling His friends. Some of them had been faithful to Him, some untrue. But whether faithful or untrue, they needed His help, and that was enough for Him. And some of us have been faithful to Christ and some untrue; but whether faithful or untrue, we need His help, and He will come to us sooner or later with His consolations, if we only hope and wait.

In the second place Christ showed His goodness by giving us a much needed proof of His Divinity.

He who rises from the dead by his own power is God. But Christ rose from the dead by his own power. Therefore, He is God.

Just as Jonas was in the whale's belly for three days and three nights and on the third day was cast upon the glittering sands of the shore; so Christ for three days and three nights was in the bowels of the earth and on the third day leaped forth through the stony jaws of the Sepulchre into the sunshine of the first Easter morning.

Just as Sampson went down to the city of his enemies and, while sleeping there, was bound down to the ground by his enemies, and when he awakened, was wroth at their perfidy, snapped the ropes which held him as if they were threads, rose to his feet, shaking his mane and roaring like a lion, went out in the streets of the city to find his foes, but the streets were empty; strode to the city gates and wrenched them from their stony sockets in the wall, tossed them across his shoulders, mounted the neighboring hill and turning, flung back the gates, with infinite scorn, at the city and its citizens; then ran exultantly through valleys and over hills to his mother's house;—so when Christ fell asleep on the Cross, they bound Him

with the cerements of the dead; but when He awakened from His sleep of death on Easter morn, He burst His bonds, waved aside the stony gate of the tomb, afrighted the guards, and went rejoicing to His mother's home.

It was in the strength of this great truth of Christ's Divinity, proved by His Resurrection from the dead, that Peter, who had been afraid of his own shadow, went out into the heart of Jerusalem and preached to five thousand men, saying to them boldly: "I preach Christ, whom you crucified."

"If Christ be not risen from the dead," says St. Paul, "your faith is vain."

If Christ had not risen from the dead, we would still be able to look back on the story of His life, very pathetic and sweet. We would still see Him born in a crib, raised in a cottage, in His public life consorting with poor men, dying upon the Cross and being buried; but that would be the end of it. But now we know that He lived, died, was buried, rose, ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

And this, of course, is the reason for the

Church's elaborate ceremonial on Easter Day. For her marble altars, her brazen candle sticks, her waxen tapers, her vases of flowers, her curling incense, the stately services of her sanctuary, her priests in their golden vestments, acolytes in their many colored cassocks and lace surplices, and the flood of music pouring down from choir loft; what are all these elements of festivity but a right royal attempt on her part to show her exultation at Christ's Divinity proved by His Resurrection from the dead!

Third, Christ showed His goodness by withdrawing the sting from death.

In the pagan world before Christ's coming, death was the grizzly monster which affrighted the minds of men. For after a few brief years of sinful luxury, cultured ease, and degrading servitude, according to their respective states of life, men crossed the River Styx to the desolate bank of death to wander through waste lands in melancholy silence beneath gloomy skies throughout a monotonous eternity. But since Christ's time one of the brightest thoughts in the Christian mind is that of death. For the Christian sees a cave in the side of a hill; and in the cave are the cerements of

the Dead, but not the Dead himself. And forth from that recess flows a stream of light which washes into our grave; so that it is not any longer what it used to be,—a mere ditch in the ground, the place of worms; but has become the anti-chamber of eternity. For Christ's Resurrection is a guarantee of ours. In confidence, therefore, each, of us can cry out exultantly: "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh death where is thy victory? For I know that my Saviour liveth; these hands of mine will be clothed in their own flesh and with these very eyes I shall see my Saviour."

In the third place Christ on Easter morn is a picture of joyousness. When they took down His Body from the cross on Good Friday night, it was a sad sight, but when He rose on Easter morn it was a gorgeous spectacle. For when the Soul of Christ re-entered the Sepulchre, the pitiful remains were magically transformed. His head radiated a halo, His bright eyes opened, His cheeks began to glow, His nostrils quivered with the breath of life, His lips parted in a gentle smile, His heart began to beat, the blood raced through His veins, His flesh resumed the warmth and color of vitality, His

rigid limbs relaxed; and Christ the Conqueror of death, leaped from His stony couch into the first Easter morn.

Christ rejoiced for our sakes and His own. For our sakes, because He had just delivered us from death and sin upon the Cross. But Christ exulted also (and I may say especially) for His own sake. To understand the second motive of Christ's exultation, we must realize that He was human like ourselves. What pleases us, pleased Him. How would you feel if some dear spirit leaned across your shoulder and whispered into your ear to-day that for you there would be no more suffering, no more tears, no death? Thus He felt! If even now at this late date, some 1900 years after the great event, our hearts expand with unaccustomed glee at the mere remembrance of the open sepulchre, how must Christ have felt in the actual experience of rising from the dead?

Oh, on that resplendent morn, as He stood there on the threshold of the tomb, in His first delicious experience of this new life after death, while it was still dark, before the sun was up, while the earth was still asleep, and silence held the earth, He realized with a pulsating sense of ecstasy that

death for Him would be no more. He must have felt himself and exclaimed: "This brow of mine will never more be pierced with thorns. These eyes of mine will never more be filled with tears. These hands of mine will never more be pierced with nails. This heart of mine will never more be broken!" He must have looked at the three crosses yonder, the Via Dolorosa, the mansions of the high priests, the Roman Governor and Herod, the garden of Olives; and burst out into an exultant Halleluiah, because His dolorous experiences were for ever past.

Therefore, *we* ought to rejoice for Christ's sake and our own. For Christ's sake. Even if His Resurrection meant nothing to us, we ought to exult, because it means so much to Him. We sympathized with Him on the Cross; we ought to congratulate Him at the open sepulchre. The spirit of felicitation is one of the noblest sentiments of the human heart. For it enables us to expand beyond the mere limits of selfishness into the lives of other men, rejoicing with them in their joy, and celebrating with them their victories. And how worthy of our best com-

pliments is Christ? How nobly He lived and how more than nobly He died?

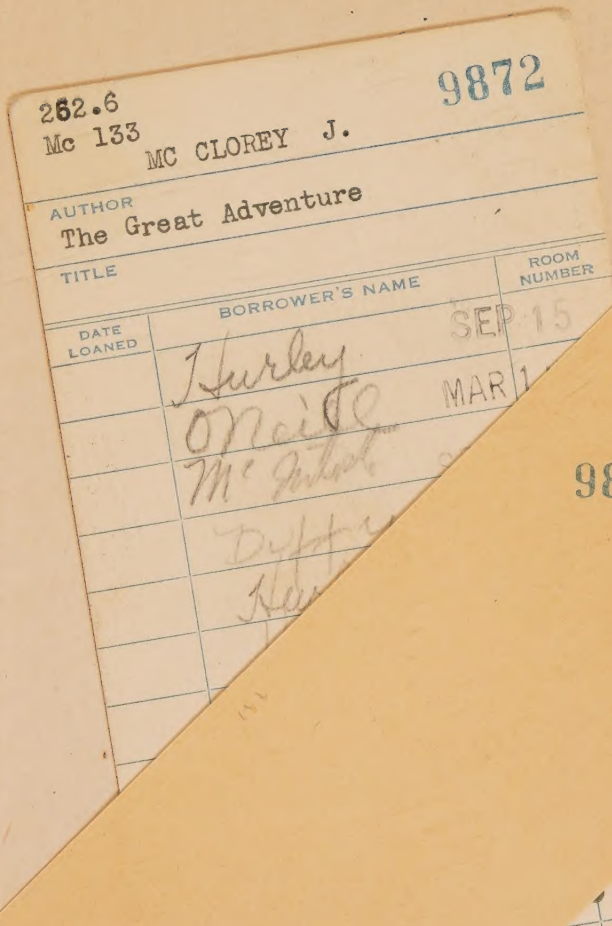
And we should not be deterred from offering Him our best by the thought that our congratulations are somewhat late, delayed by some 1900 years. For this is the great difference between earthly and heavenly joy, that the former stales, the latter does not. And Christ at His Father's throne and on our altars to-day is just as exultant over the vibrant and thrilling experience of rising from the dead as He was on the first Easter morn; and our congratulations are just as acceptable to Him this moment as they would have been if we had welcomed Him with Magdalen at the tomb.

Finally, we must rejoice for our own sakes. The heart of man is made for happiness. In every conscious moment of our lives we seek joy. Now inevitably we shall go in quest of pleasure either in God, or in the world and in sin. And because Almighty God wished to save us from the intriguing charms of the world and win us to Himself, He became a man, arraying Himself in all the lovable qualities of humanity. And on Easter morn especially He appropriates

every form of loveliness: so that He can truly say to us: "My children, if as I am to-day, a picture of beauty, a picture of goodness and a picture of joyousness, I cannot win your hearts, pray tell me, what can?"

Oh let us fix our eyes upon this picture of beauty, beautiful in His Humanity, beautiful in His Divinity, and beautiful in His wounds; this picture of goodness who shows His goodness by consoling His friends, by giving us a much needed proof of His Divinity, by withdrawing the sting from death. This picture of joyousness, who rejoices for His own sake and ours:—and with the whole Christian world, on this golden Easter morn, let us say to Him: To Thee, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Risen Lord, be honor and glory and thanksgiving; Ave, Salve and Hosanna to the King!

THE END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